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Summative Evaluation of the Assessment, Counselling and Referral -- British Columbia

Final Report

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Executive Summary

1. Context of the Evaluation and Terms of Reference

The federal government and the government of British Columbia developed the Strategic Initiatives (SI) program to "... provide a funding mechanism for the federal government to work in partnership with provincial and territorial governments to test new and innovative approaches in high priority areas of employment, education, and income security." One of a number of such innovative approaches was the establishment of 11 pilot projects providing **enhanced** Assessment, Counselling and Referral (ACR) services throughout the province.

The ACR pilot projects were designed to "...test and demonstrate an **enhanced** assessment, counselling and referral system for people on income support. It is expected to improve the linkages within and between employment programs, the individual on income support and the labour market." They were to be planned and managed by a local Steering Committee of government and community partners.

The ACR/SI pilot projects were to incorporate up to five key program components, depending on their local service needs assessments and assessment of their client profile. The key components from which they could choose were:

1. *Starting Points* group assessment process to assist clients in developing a "First Steps" action plan towards employment;

2. In-depth group assessment/orientation (especially for multi-barrier clients);

3. Diagnostic assessment for those whose barriers to employment exceed the capacity of standard services provided by the funding partner staff or contracted agencies (especially for clients with specific physical, psychological and/or learning disabilities);

4. Group career planning building on recognized best practices in this process; and

5. Learner support to reduce personal/social barriers for those clients who require this service to increase their capacity to meet their employment goals.

The local Committees could — and did — modify existing programming or develop new (or new to the community) programming that would meet the ACR needs of their local client group as effectively as possible.

Integral to the planning and implementation of the ACR/SI was the requirement that there be "program-wide evaluation at appropriate intervals." In keeping with this approach there was a formative evaluation completed in 1997. A summative evaluation, including collection of baseline data was to follow, with completion scheduled for the end of the 1998/99 fiscal year.

The overall objective of the summative evaluation was stated in the Request for Proposals as being:

> *...to examine issues associated with program delivery, effectiveness and outcomes, as well as ongoing performance monitoring. [And it] will evaluate the early outcomes of the Initiative. A baseline data component will be required.'*

This is the final report of that summative evaluation.

2. Summative Evaluation Methodology

There were two main components of the evaluation research. One was a baseline telephone survey of past participants and a comparison group of non-ACR users. The other was a case study approach to all of the 11 pilots being evaluated. This included on-site visits to most sites and telephone interviews with the remaining ones. The site visits included interviews with the Steering Committee and contracted service deliverers and a review of relevant local documents. These two main research components were supplemented by interviews with key respondents at senior policy and planning levels within the partner governments and a review of related documents at the program-wide level. The data collection strategies and the analytical techniques were matched to the nature of the data and the evaluation issues and questions being addressed. Thus, the findings rely on both content analysis and a variety of statistical analyses.

3. Findings of the Summative Evaluation

Evaluative Findings on Impacts, Effects and Outcome of ACR/SI Programming

The ACR/SI has not been without its difficulties, but overall the impacts and effects have been positive. For the program developers and managers among the government partners, it had benefits for meeting their goals for services to clients, for learning to work together (which has been a useful precursor to their recent move into the Labour Market Development Agreement — LMDA — co-management/co-funding framework), and for learning more about each other's client group and how to work with them. The workload of management during the planning stages was increased, but once the pilots were fully implemented, this seems to have been reduced. The workload for many of the local MAETT Training Consultants was increased, at least sporadically, but this was not uniformly the case.

For service deliverers the impacts were more mixed. On an individual, local level, the working relationships with government partners tended to be positive, and contractors generally felt the programming models they developed and delivered were good ones. On the other hand, the introduction of the service Phases under BC Benefits (starting mid-1996) tended to have negative effects on service providers (and clients). The flow of potential clients was interrupted and seriously reduced in some cases, resulting in considerable strain on the ongoing business operations of a number of contractors. Clients who were being served before sometimes then had to wait months for service, and many

who had just come into the system and completed Starting Points could not access follow-up services for as much as seven more months (if they had not yet found employment by that time). This disruption of the continuity of services was seen by all as detrimental to both clients and service providers.

The survey results are clear that participation in the ACR/SI is beneficial. It enhances the participants' knowledge of the labour market and increases their confidence in their employability (ability to find, retain or change jobs). When compared to non-participants, it is equally clear that ACR/SI participation increases by a factor of four the likelihood of a successful outcome, defined as finding employment and/or pursuing further education or training.

Evaluative Findings on Objectives Achievement for the ACR/SI as a Whole

The objective of developing partnerships at all government levels to plan for and implement the ACR/SI has largely been met. There has been considerable time, effort and personal dedication invested at all levels in achieving this objective throughout the evolution of the ACR/SI pilot projects. (In several communities these efforts, as embodied in the Steering Committees, have continued under the aegis of the LMDA.) The majority of communities developed positive, collaborative processes for planning and implementation. These efforts were not without their difficulties, as partners with diverse philosophies and modes of operation learned to work together. But most managed quite well and reported that the process in itself enhanced their own understanding of each other's work and of the clients who each had previously served separately.

The programming delivered indeed enhanced rather than duplicated existing ACR services. The local Committees were careful to identify needs that were not being met and to work with the service-providing community to develop programming that was adapted specifically to those needs. They worked within the framework of the five programming options set out for the ACR/SI, and developed innovative means that met their client profile, budget and local service resource base.

The objective of improving linkages among partners and employment-related services and between clients and these services was not achieved to the same degree. This largely was due to structural constraints. The primary difficulty was that the change to serving Phase II clients on Income Assistance (IA) limited the ability of ACR/SI service providers to refer to these services. Also, when clients were in Phase II they often were less accessible in the first place or less willing to utilize these services. There was a minor issue of multi-service agencies not referring clients to outside services as much as they might have — or at least this was a perception in some cases — but government partners took corrective measures if the concern seemed grounded in fact.

Evaluative Findings on Program Rationale — Is There a Continuing Need for Services and Is the ACR/SI Approach the Optimal One?

There is clearly a need for ACR-type services, given that there is an increasing proportion of individuals who have substantial barriers to planning their moves towards independence from support programming. The economic downturn of the province in several key sectors, the increased competitiveness of the labour market, and the changing profile of the unemployed and those on IA for extended periods all lead respondents to the conclusion that this type of programming will continue to be essential.

Though there have been difficulties in working out the collaborative model of planning and management, respondents in general feel that the principle of drawing on local planning to determine needs and to develop and allocate services should be maintained in future. Local control of significant decision making is seen as an integral part of that approach.

Thus, there is a need for these types of services and every likelihood that the partnership approach to planning and implementation is, overall, quite effective. The approach seems to be fully justified, even if it has its difficulties. Given that respondents learned a great deal about the clientele, about responsive programming, and about working together to plan and implement it, most feel that they are well placed to move ahead along the same lines. Many already are, under the framework of the LMDA and through innovative use of other funding envelopes.

Evaluative Findings on Alternatives/Future Directions for Programming

It is clear that the basic functions of ACR programming should continue to be provided, but there is an increasing need to develop assessment tools that can be more effective with the multi-barrier, long-term IA recipient. If obstacles to an effective process, such as the waiting period arising out of BC Benefits legislation on Phases for receipt of services, are removed, then a number of possible problems for future programming would be reduced or eliminated.

It is evident that the collaborative, co-managed and co-funded approach holds much promise, but respondents point out that programming goals and processes need to be harmonized among each of the government partners. This will enable clarification of programming goals and facilitate the identification of criteria for success, which in turn could lead to a more effective assessment of outcome.

Evaluative Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The ACR/SI was designed to be a *strategic* approach to enhancing the panoply of assessment, counselling and referral services provided to persons requiring (and required to pursue) assistance in achieving financial independence from government income support programs — through increased attachment to the labour force.

The pilot projects clearly demonstrate that there is a need for such programming and that the enhancement of existing services is both necessary and possible. It is clear that having project planning undertaken by a Steering Committee of local partners at both government levels, acting in concert in many cases with service deliverers, was an effective, if sometimes taxing, means of ensuring that programming met local needs in an innovative manner. The ongoing co-management of programming was generally effective, though it was not without its problems at times.

Work remains to be done to harmonize the sometimes divergent mandates, policies and day-to-day procedures of the two levels of government (and the three partners — MHR, MAETT and HRDC). It is also important to develop additional assessment tools that will be more effective with the various client groups who experience their own distinctive barriers to the move towards independence.

If the ACR/SI is seen as an experiment from which useful lessons can be learned, it has succeeded in being so. The overall lesson learned from the ACR/SI is that it is a model that was effective in itself. The outcomes were positive. It is a demonstration of the value and efficiency of a locally planned and implemented program. The problems that arose often reflected contradictions in the larger policy and legislative framework, rather than a lack of will or skill on the part of those who initially conceived it or of those who then carried it out. The essential elements of its programming content — including the flexibility to modify programming readily — are all worth incorporating into future programming to meet the original policy goals.

1. Context of the Evaluation and Terms of Reference

One of the most daunting tasks that governments are faced with today is how to make the best use of limited resources. Within the vast array of calls upon the public purse, the provision of income support for those who have no other financial resources is surely one of the most pressing and expensive programming demands governments face. Reform of social support programming is one of the primary strategies that governments are following to try to make the best use of resources available to them.

In Canada, federal and provincial governments have pursued a number of approaches to the reform of social support programming. One of the most substantial and comprehensive endeavours has been the joint federal/provincial Strategic Initiatives (SI) program. This is a multi-faceted program composed of several innovative components that have been developed and piloted across Canada. As the background documents for the SI describe it, the program:

> *...is to provide a funding mechanism for the federal government to work in partnership with provincial and territorial governments to test new and innovative approaches in high priority areas of employment, education and income security. Projects supported by SI are funded on a 50/50 basis between [the respective] governments.*

The word "strategic" has great import in this Initiative because of the context in which the partners at federal and provincial levels are operating. That is, there are five closely related and major conditions that must be addressed these days in publicly supported social programming. These are both "structural" and "societal" conditions. Three can be seen as challenges to support of programming, and two can be seen as opportunities to be considered in programming. They are:

Challenges

Structural

- Constrained budgets; i.e., fewer financial resources upon which governments can draw for support of social programming; and

- Increased levels of need for social programming; i.e., increased proportions of those who fall below poverty lines or are otherwise economically vulnerable (displaced workers in resource and traditional manufacturing industries, etc.).

Societal

- A diminution in the degree of public support for social programming, with less tolerance for this support and a concomitant demand for more precise targeting of any support that is provided.[1]

Opportunities

- A number of existing programming approaches that are sufficiently effective to provide solid building blocks for future programming within the current context of challenges; and

- A greatly increased expectation, based in policy and memoranda of understanding, for collaboration between levels of government and among these levels and the community — for the design and co-management of programming.

Faced with these challenges and opportunities, the key to effective social reform has to be *strategic* thinking. Programs that are currently in use must be assessed for effectiveness, and lessons learned from them should be applied to future programming. These future programs must be very carefully constructed, implemented and evaluated to make sure that they reflect the best use of limited resources. Central to that program design is identifying what has been effective and building upon it, wherever this seems to be a promising approach. In turn, these newer programs must be assessed for their effectiveness and efficiency and for what can be learned from them for subsequent programming. It is an iterative process and one that must be increasingly focused, increasingly strategic in conception and application.

One such program conceived and supported through the SI is the pilot testing of 11 *enhanced* Assessment, Counselling and Referral (ACR) pilots across British Columbia.[2] We emphasize "enhanced" because these *functions* have been an integral part of federal and provincial programming for individuals on provincial Income Assistance (IA) and those who are on federal Employment Insurance (EI).[3] Thus, the objective of the ACR/SI was to:

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1 This may seem to be a rather harsh statement, and the reader may wish to have some substantiation of it. In a series of other studies we have done, we have had occasion to interview a wide range of stakeholders in social services across the country — government, educators, social service providers — and to conduct comprehensive literature reviews on the status of public support of social service programming. This research confirms what we state here, though we must say it also confirms our own perception as observant members of our society. We would be pleased to provide some of our reports. Most notable would be the pre-sectoral study of the profession of social work (for HRDC/HQ) and the follow-up sectoral study that is currently under way. We have also had occasion to research this topic as part of workshops we have developed and delivered for the Ministry of Human Resources in B.C.

2 As the pilots evolved, one of the original 11 developed two other service centres, and another already had two service centres, making 14 service centres — all of which were reviewed as case studies. But we continue to refer to 11 pilots in all. Others did follow later, but this report deals with the 11 earliest pilots, including their additional service centres.

3 There is a kind of overlap of these two types of recipients, as the reader will know. That is, the 1997 changes in Employment Insurance legislation allow for persons who are on IA but who have been on EI in the previous three years (or five years in the case of parents who left the workforce because of responsibilities for young children) to access federally funded programming. These are called "mutual" clients.

*...test and demonstrate an **enhanced** assessment, counselling and referral system for people on income support. It is expected to improve the linkages within and between employment programs, the individual on income support, and the labour market. (from the background documents provided for the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the evaluation — emphasis ours)*

The ACR/SI pilot projects were to incorporate up to five key program components, depending on their local service needs assessments and assessment of their client profile. The key components from which they could choose, and those they could modify as they felt best, were:

1. *Starting Points* group assessment process to assist clients in developing a "First Steps" action plan towards employment;

2. In-depth group assessment/orientation (especially for multi-barrier clients);

3. Diagnostic assessment for those whose barriers to employment exceed the capacity of standard services provided by the funding partner staff or contracted agencies (especially for clients with specific physical, psychological and/or learning disabilities);

4. Group career planning building on recognized best practices in this process; and

5. Learner support to reduce personal/social barriers for those clients who require this service to increase their capacity to meet their employment goals.

The content of the ACR/SI was innovative in that it called for enhancement rather than duplication or the establishment of hitherto untried programming. But it was also distinctive in the *means* by which it was to be developed and managed. Again, turning to background documents we find that:

The ACR/SI is unique because it was conceived within a broad framework of partnership between the Government of Canada and two ministries of the Province of British Columbia....it was intended to function as an inter-governmental process that extends well beyond the usual level of joint funding and mutually exclusive responsibilities of separate governments. The ACR/SI featured a delegation of joint planning, design, service delivery and accountability responsibilities to the government partners with an equal opportunity for input for each...

...it was at the local level where much of the responsibility for planning [etc.] of enhanced [ACR] programs and processes was intended to take place. Nine local Committees were established to create 11 pilot projects in various communities. The Committees were not required to deliver the same services in the same way.

The partnership program...was...to bring together...[the partners] to address the common goal of moving individuals on income support from dependence to

independence and long-term attachment to the workforce. (from documentation in the Request for Proposals).

In sum, the ACR/SI was to be a model of strategically placed, innovative, collaborative programming. It was proposed and supported at the highest levels of provincial and federal government, yet was to be largely locally designed, co-managed by the government partners, and delivered through contracts with community-based service providers.

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

Integral to the planning and implementation of the ACR/SI has been the requirement that there be "program-wide evaluation at appropriate intervals." In keeping with this approach there was a formative evaluation completed in 1997. A summative evaluation, including collection of baseline data was to follow, with completion scheduled for the end of the 1998/99 fiscal year.

The overall objective of the summative evaluation was stated in the Request for Proposals as being:

...to examine issues associated with program delivery, effectiveness, and outcomes, as well as ongoing performance monitoring. [And it] will evaluate the early outcomes of the Initiative. A baseline data component will be required.'

A multi-dimensional methodology was set out in the RFP and its final form is described in the chapter 2.

A Note on the Organization of the Summative Evaluation Report

The terms of reference for the ACR/SI summative evaluation also spoke to the way the report itself was to be organized. There is to be one volume that contains a summary of the findings from the various study components, and a second volume that is the Technical Report. The latter contains the full report of the findings of the baseline surveys, as well as other descriptive background materials on the pilot projects, lists of respondents and copies of data collection instruments, etc. The remainder of the present document comprises Volume 1.

2. Summative Evaluation Methodology

First of all, it may be useful to review what a *summative* evaluation is. In one of the standard sources in evaluation research literature, this kind of research is described as follows:

> *Summative evaluations are aimed at determining the essential effectiveness of programs and are particularly important in making decisions about continuing or terminating an experimental program or demonstration project. As such, summative evaluations are often useful to funders...*[4]

As stated in our proposal, the summative evaluation is framed in terms of four core evaluation issues.[5] The research methodology must allow the evaluator to:

- identify program *impacts and effects*, that is, the *outcomes* of program participation, basing this identification on both experiential grounds from respondents' accounts and from statistically analyzed quantitative data;
- assess program *objectives achievement*;
- determine whether the program has a sound *rationale* for continuation; and
- recommend *alternative* programming approaches, or what *future forms* programming might take that would meet the overall goals for the ACR functions.

In order to address these issues there will be a number of evaluation *questions* to be answered that are specific to the given program under consideration. These were provided in the RFP and the evaluators added a few others. (The full matrix of the evaluation issues and questions is found in the Technical Report, Volume 2.)

The evaluation methodology set out in the RFP is soundly based on the use of multiple lines of evidence in order to achieve the most comprehensive and balanced view of the ACR/SI as a whole. With that view, it is then possible to develop sound evaluative conclusions and useful recommendations for the future.

There are two main components of the evaluation research. One is the baseline survey of past participants and a comparison group of non-ACR users. This yielded a rich source of quantitative data, which was subjected to a range of statistical analytical techniques, including logistic regression analysis. The other is a case-study approach to all of the 11 pilot projects being evaluated. This provided the majority of the considerable amount

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4 Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-focused Evaluation*, 2nd edition, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1986, pp. 65-66. The summative evaluation can be compared to formative evaluations, which "focus on ways of improving and enhancing programs not only in their initial development, but at any point in the life of a program...[these] are particularly useful to program administrators." The present evaluation of the ACR/SI shares goals from both types of research and has methodological elements in common (i.e., draws on both qualitative and quantitative data, with appropriate analytical techniques for each).

5 Based on the reference work, *Guide on the Program Evaluation Function*, Treasury Board of Canada, 1981,p. 7.

of qualitative data collected. These two main components were supplemented by interviews with key respondents at senior policy and planning levels within the partner governments and a review of related documents at the program-wide level. (For a list of key respondents, please see the Appendix.)

The data collection strategies and the analytical techniques were matched to the nature of the data and the evaluation issues and questions being addressed. The data collection strategies, data sources and analytical strategies are summarized in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1
Overview of Methodological Approach

Case Studies		
Data Collection Strategy	**Data Source**	**Analytical Strategy**
On-site, in-person interviews with: (In a few cases, the interviews were done by phone, especially in situations where programming had been concluded for some time.)	Steering Committee members (36) Service deliverers (45)	Content analysis
Document review of:	Pilot project-specific documents (contracts, informational materials, program statistics — as available)	Content analysis
Baseline Surveys (Participants and Comparison Group)		
Data Collection Strategy	**Data Source**	**Analytical Strategy**
Telephone survey of: Telephone survey of:	Sample of 454 past participants of ACR/SI pilot projects Sample of 401 Income Assistance recipients drawn from same communities as pilot projects. Screened for not participating in ACR/SI.	Statistical analysis, univariate and multi-variate, including logistic regression analysis of a sub-set of both groups, further matched on key variables.
Initiative-Wide Research		
Data Collection Strategy	**Data Source**	**Analytical Strategy**
In-person or telephone with:	Key respondents at senior governmental partner levels (8)	Content analysis
Document review of:	Background documents on history and implementation of SI and ACR/SI	Content analysis
Review of:	Literature on work incentive programming nationally and internationally to put ACR/SI in context and complement identification of best practices	Content analysis

Note: It had been proposed that there would be focus groups conducted with current participants, but at the time of the evaluation research the 11 pilots had either completed their initial pilot program delivery or had evolved into another form. Thus, focus groups for the pilot projects were not an option.

The evaluation field research took place from August 1998 to February 1999. Because most of the ACR/SI pilot projects were no longer operating under the original three-year pilot funding, much of the research data were retrospective, that is, respondents were describing what had been done, looking back over the past several years. The events and processes they were describing were very fresh in their minds, however, and they were in a good position to identify impacts and effects of the pilot projects on their work (for case study key respondents) or on their employability (for past participants).

3. Findings of the Summative Evaluation

The report on findings begins with a brief description of the ACR/SI pilot projects themselves. This is intended to serve two purposes. One is to give the reader a snapshot of pilot project activities, and the other is to provide the background data to which we will return when we discuss several of the evaluation issues in the subsequent sections.

3.1 Descriptive Overview of the ACR/SI Pilot Projects

As noted earlier, there were nine Steering Committees across the province and, ultimately, 11 pilot projects established by these nine Committees.[6] The list of pilot projects and highlights of the service components they developed and delivered under the ACR/SI are summarized Table 1. However, it may be useful for the reader to present our descriptive commentary on the characteristics of the pilots first.

Key Characteristics of the ACR Pilot Services

Table 1 shows that all of the communities but one utilized *Starting Points,* which was seen as the basic component for assisting IA clients to make their next moves toward employment.

It is also clear that the pilot projects tended to evolve over time, even within the relatively short time they existed. By moving down the Duration column, it can be seen that the Starting Points experience often led the Steering Committee to the identification (or further confirmation) of additional service needs for their client group(s). They then modified programming that would address these needs more precisely. Thus we see Prince Rupert developing a two-week "employability skills" workshop, including the services of a support worker for follow-up with clients. These clients were identified in the original Starting Points sessions when it became clear that a large proportion were not at the stage where they could prepare an Action Plan and hence needed more intensive assistance.

Or we see that over two and a half years, the Abbotsford ACR/SI began with Starting Points and at the same time offered a 10-day group intervention for career planning, including related testing of clients on employability dimensions. Next, there was a more intensive group orientation program, with access to individual counselling, more intensive referrals and tracking and follow-up. At the same time, a one-week group intervention in

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6 It should be noted that the ACR/SI *functions* were continued in many locations, and other communities began their own enhanced ACR programming. Usually these were funded from different envelopes. These second-stage ACR communities are: North Vancouver, Saanich, Victoria, Coquitlam, Kelowna, Comox, Powell River, Smithers. Because of ease of access to Coquitlam, the evaluators included interviews with key respondents from this location, and thus the descriptive information is included in Table 1.

personal skills related to employability was offered. This ACR/SI was one of several pilots that also developed a Career Resource Centre for clients' and others' use.

Fort St. John also is typical of this kind of progression. They retained Starting Points, which was delivered largely by staff from two of the government partners (MAETT and HRDC), and added on several other components. These were designed to increase support for multi-barrier clients. There were also hour-long, informal workshops designed to help clients understand the larger context of the changing job market and to deal with personal issues that impeded their attachment to the labour market (difficulties in handling personal finances, substance abuse, etc.)

Nelson was one of the communities that extended its Starting Points approach, to increase the clients' capacity to create and follow an Action Plan. They also established job search resources, including a job posting board, résumé services, provision of some Labour Market Information (LMI) and information on other community services that could assist clients in meeting the challenges of daily life.

This trend toward intensification and diversification of services to meet identified needs was typical of the ACR/SI pilots as a whole.

In that the ACR/SI programming was to be adapted to local circumstances and not to duplicate existing services, respondents were asked to identify particularly innovative services that were developed. Starting Points was a new program in itself and was most frequently mentioned as an innovative approach. Its advantages included being a *group* assessment approach, which addressed the need for serving a larger number of clients at one time, as the provincial government was moving to require that all IA clients participate in assessment immediately upon coming on to benefits. It also addressed the importance of intervening quickly to reduce the chance of an individual becoming entrenched in dependency on public assistance. Starting Points was developed in British Columbia for national usage and then adapted for use in B.C.[7]

Its disadvantage, as reported by a wide range of respondents, was that it was not as well suited to certain client groups, notably those with multiple barriers to achieving independence from government support. This included those with certain types of mental health problems; those with substance abuse or other major lifestyle difficulties; those who for cultural reasons felt the kind of participation called for was not appropriate to them; and/or those who had language or literacy barriers that reduced participation. It also became apparent that it was not as appropriate for youth as for adults (and the provincial government had placed its highest priority for programming interventions on youth). In response to this realization, further modifications were made by its creator.

However, we note that Starting Points was not designed to be a "one size fits all" program,

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7 Starting Points was developed by Dr. William Borgen of the University of British Columbia. The development included input from various partner groups, and it was itself piloted before wider use in the province. Dr. Borgen and colleagues also trained many of those who delivered the program across the province.

nor to be *the* program for all situations and communities. In the process of the ACR/SI, this expectation was placed upon it, however. Thus, the disadvantages that were identified by respondents should not be seen as criticisms of Starting Points, but as indicators of the respondents' awareness that there was an incongruity between what was needed in some cases and what was available. That is, it was considered by respondents to be very effective for the more employment-ready and less so for those with multiple barriers to employment. This leads directly back to why the local Steering Committees developed programming innovations over time, which the ACR/SI gave them room to do. This was a feature of the whole ACR/SI that received considerable approval from these respondents.

Another case of unique programming was an ESL Enhancement for Professionals program. It was delivered first in Burnaby to assist a high client load of immigrants who were professionals in their country of origin and needed language skills that were more closely targeted to their particular needs for moving into the labour force in B.C.

Another program developed and provided in Vancouver was called BOSS (Building on Special Skills). It was designed for entrepreneurially oriented clients to assist them in the very early stages of assessing their own interests and skills, building toward what might be a part-time, start-up effort that might develop over time. It did not focus on full-time job creation but on presenting the concept of creating income through entrepreneurial means.

Learner Support programs in several communities were mentioned as being new and very effective means of assisting clients in following through on their action plans. This was a one-to-one service and was very labour-intensive. It called for a wide range of skills on the part of the service deliverer. This included "social work" skills and a willingness to help the "whole person." This might mean linking a client to substance abuse programming, or visiting a spouse to help in accessing social services for dealing with family violence. This was a kind of service that was unique for the community, in terms of serving the ACR/SI client profile and being aimed overall at increasing their employability.

It is clear that the ACR/SI programming itself was built around a core of Starting Points. Local Steering Committees often modified Starting Points itself or developed an array of the other programming components to serve distinctive needs of their client profile. There was a decided sense of learn-as-you-go in this process, with Steering Committees and contracted service providers benefiting from what they had seen to be effective — or problematic — in programming content or process.

With the above highlights of pilot programming applications in mind, we turn to the highlights charts. These are followed by our findings on the evaluative issues.

TABLE 1
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Campbell River

Clients: IA Phase II (initially); IA Phase I (during the last year of the initiative)

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• 2 half days of training for each intake	Feb/96-Jan/97
• Career Development Centre	• Drop-in centre for career development and IJS activities; for clients aged 30 yrs and over	Sep/97-Aug/98
• Work Experience	• 2-4 week placements with employers for work experience	Feb/96-Jan/97
• Taking the Next Steps	• Extension of a previous program — Job Project. Review goals, adapt plans, use community resources; group format	Feb/96-Jan/97
• Work Support Centre	• Drop-in centre for IJS; computer lab; self-directed learning for job search skills and tools; for clients aged under 29 yrs	Sep/97-Aug/98
• Workshops	• Résumé preparation, LMI/job search, orientation to Youthworks; 12 workshops on each subject	Sep/97-Aug/98
• Learner Supports	• Self-directed upgrade of academic skills or literacy	Feb/96-Jan/97

ACR/SI Pilot: Nanaimo

Clients: IA (initially); then restricted to IA Phase II; lots of YouthWorks; some EI

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• Adapted to fit IA needs and language levels	Oct/95-Mar/98
• Career Directions	• 4-week group career search program	Oct/95-Mar/98
• Job Seekers	• 3-week group job search program (not Job Club model)	Oct/95-Mar/98
• Job Talk	• 3-week group program aimed at developing communication skills required in job environment (also assertiveness training and anger management)	Oct/95-Mar/98

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Nanaimo		
• Diagnostic Services	• Employment counselling and résumé preparation for special needs clients (severely disadvantaged in finding work)	Jul/96-Jul/98
• Therapeutic Counselling	• Managed referral and financial billing systems allowing service providers to refer clients to appropriate therapeutic counselling	Jul/96-Jul/98
• Employment and Career Counselling	• One-on-one employment and career counselling; group workshops in resumes, interview skills, LMI, hidden job market, personal hygiene	Apr/97-Mar/98
• Labour Market Information	• Established the Central Island Employment Network; put all funded service providers on the Internet; created home pages for government and for contractors; paid for Internet service	Oct/95-Mar/97
ACR/SI Pilot: Parksville		
Clients: IA Phase I, IA Phase II; also some EI		
Services:		
Service Components	**Service Component Description**	**Duration**
• Starting Points	• Adapted to deal with anger management and poverty issues, plus introduction to community resources and goal setting; ran as 2-day program and then as funding changed, reduced program to 1 day	Sep/95-Mar/98
• Job Action	• Job Club — group intervention; covered job search skills and tools	Apr/96-Mar/98
• Career Paths	• Career counselling (one-on-one); 3-day career exploration workshop; examines option of career change rather than simply finding a job	Apr/96-Mar/98
• Scribe Services	• Assistance with preparation of résumés, letters, applications (one-on-one)	Sep/96-Mar/97
• Problem Solving	• Problem solving and information provision (advocacy work)	Sep/96-Mar/97
• Basic Skills Assessment	• Literacy assessment	Sep/96-Mar/97

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Prince Rupert

Clients: Initially any unemployed interested in service, then only those in Phase II of BC Benefits

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points • 2-week "employability skills" workshop including the services of a support worker for follow-up with clients	• 2 half-day sessions, goal is Action Plan (only 15% completed) • For high-need clients, as identified in Starting Points; group sharing of experiences, assessment of barriers, guest speakers from large local employers	1995 to end of FY 96/97

ACR/SI Pilot: Fort St. John

Clients: Multi-barrier clients, as identified in Starting Points, initially IA (Phase I and on) and then allowed to serve EI also. Late in program decision was made by a committee member that program could not serve former clients who had been or were currently employed for more than one month, so many who had been served could no longer be.

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions, delivered twice a month	Sep/95-Mar/98
• Starting Points toward end of contract	• Focus on identification of multi-barrier clients and referral to Support Centre for other services	Spring/96-Mar/98
• Service Needs Determination for MHR	• Support Centre a one-stop service centre, including one-to-one services, drop-in, newsletter • Monitoring and follow-up for MHR	
• Counselling if called for	• Counselling on barriers as they relate to employment, job maintenance support for those becoming employed, support of families by informing of services	
• Workshops	• Workshops on barriers to employment (substance abuse, etc.), on LMI, job maintenance, budgeting, etc. • Referrals to other services (training, etc.), resources (transition houses, clinical counselling, etc.)	

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Nelson

Clients: Initially any IAR; post-BC Benefits restricted to Phase II IAR's; the resource centre is open to anyone unemployed

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	Oct/95
• Starting Points	• 3 half-day sessions for each intake	Apr/97
• Group Job Search	• Career exploration for post-SP participants still unsure of direction	(current)
• Resource Centre	• Job board, résumé services, some LMI and community resources information	Open for several yrs
• 52 week self-employment program	• Identified 3 people with entrepreneurial orientation and a realistic business idea and funded their start-up; two years later, 2 of them are still operating	1996/97
• Purchase of block training time	• Viable training options were identified for about 6 individuals and training time purchased directly (e.g., 2 were trained as forestry technicians)	1996/97

ACR/SI Pilot: Nakusp

Clients: Initially any IAR; post-BC Benefits restricted to Phase II IAR's; resources are open to anyone unemployed

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	Oct/95
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	End of 1996
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	Apr/97
• Assisted Job Search	• 1-on-1 counselling, job board, résumé services, referrals, computer access	Apr/97
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	Apr/98
• Assisted Job Search	• 1-on-1 counselling, job board, résumé services, referrals, computer access	Apr/98

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Burnaby		
Clients: Initially any IAR; post-BC Benefits restricted to IA Phase II clients; the resource centre is open to anyone unemployed		
Services:		
Service Components	**Service Component Description**	**Duration**
• Group Orientation Sessions	• one, 1.5-hour session	Sep/95
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake	Sep/95
• Career Planning	• 10 days to 3 weeks; group sessions and one-on-one counselling	Sep/95
• Resource Centre	• Drop-in format with one-on-one counselling available	Sep/95
• Career Preparation for ESL clients	• 12 weeks; one-on-one counselling and group sessions	Jan/96
ACR/SI Pilot: Vancouver Eastside ACR		
Clients: Phase II IAR's		
Services:		
Service Components	**Service Component Description**	**Duration**
• Starting Points	• 2 half-day sessions for each intake with mandatory follow-up counselling session	Apr/97
• BOSS	• 2-week program in developing a micro business	Apr/97
• Career Resource Centre (CRC)	• Drop-in centre for EI/IA Eastside residents; many job search resources with staff assistance available	Mar/97
• Strategies for Success	• Job retention techniques	No longer offered

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Vancouver Westside

Clients: Initially any IAR; post-BC Benefits restricted to IA Phase II clients; the resource centre is open to local EI/IA recipients with a résumé

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Orientation Sessions	• One half-day session, held weekly	Oct/95
• Starting Points	• 3 half-day sessions: middle session is with a psychologist	Oct/95
• Career Decision Making	• 3 half-day sessions	No longer offered
• Job Search Central	• Resource centre for independent job search	Summer 1997

ACR/SI Pilot: Southeast Vancouver

Clients: IA Phase II for all programming; mainly YouthWorks for Starting Points; immigrants for the ESL program; all unemployed persons for the Career Resource Centre

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• Standard 2-day Starting Points group assessment program leading to a return to work Action Plan; plus BC Benefits information session	Jul/97-ongoing
• Information Session		Jul/97-ongoing
• Career Resource Centre	• Standard Career Resource — access to computers, telephone, fax, photocopier, plus employment counselling and a focus on self-help	Jul/97-ongoing
• Career Planning	• 3-week career planning program using a group format	Jul/97-Mar/98
• ESL — "Working in Canada"	• 3-week program for immigrants; emphasis on concepts, terminology and job search activities, cultural differences, expected behaviours, and being on the job in Canada; plus referrals to other programs	Apr/97-ongoing
• Job Retention Strategies	• 3-week program to address social or behaviourial issues for people who have problems on the job; emphasis on communication skills and styles	Apr/97-Mar/98

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Kamloops

Clients: Initially all IA, then IA Phase II and III (also some EI in Compass)

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• Standard Starting Points group assessment program leading to a return to work Action Plan; delivered in Kamloops, Clearwater, Ashcroft and Lillooet	1995-96
• Compass	• 4-week group intervention; in depth assessment, structured environment for job search, direction to training, LMI component, Action Plan; delivered in Kamloops and Ashcroft	1996-97
• Independent Living Resource Centre	• Resource centre in Kamloops for disabled persons	1996-97
• Literacy Program	• Reading and comprehension learning program for adults with less than Grade 8 education; delivered in Kamloops	1996-97

ACR/SI Pilot: Coquitlam

Clients: IA Phase II and III; mainly Welfare to Work with some YouthWorks clients

Services:

Service Components	Service Component Description	Duration
• Starting Points	• Started with standard Starting Points model; then due to high proportion of clients with multiple and hidden barriers, adapted to ½ day self-assessment group session plus one-on-one counselling as needed and Action Plan development on second day	Nov/96-Mar/98
• Learner Supports	• Personal and career counselling and referral for clients with serious barriers requiring multiple interventions and where a re-employment plan was not feasible at the outset; plus case management of clients	Mar/97-Mar/98
• Job Placement/Marketer	• Individual marketing service for a subset of clients from learner supports, helping to place client into paid employment	Aug/97-Mar/98

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Coquitlam		
• Starting Points	• Same as for Bowman & Associates	Nov/96-Mar/98
• Learner Supports	• Same as for Bowman & Associates	Mar/97-Mar/98
• Job Placement/Marketer	• Same as for Bowman & Associates	Oct/97-Mar/98
ACR/SI Pilot: Abbotsford		
Clients:	For West Coast Training Institute — initially, all IA (mainly Phase I), then Phase II/III only For Success Centre — mainly mutual clients (plus any unemployed legal resident in Canada for the Career Resource Centre)	
Services:		
Service Components	**Service Component Description**	**Duration**
• Starting Points	• Standard 2 half-day Starting Points group assessment program leading to a return to work Action Plan	Aug/95-Mar/97
• Career Decisions	• 10-day group intervention in career planning and decision making including aptitude and other career/interest-related testing	Aug/95-Mar/97
• Assessment/Case Management	• 1-hour group orientation, 20 minutes of individual consultation with case manager, an Action Plan, referral to programming, and follow-up/tracking	Jul/97-Mar/98
• CORE Program	• 1-week group intervention in self-esteem, goal setting, career exploration, and job search techniques	Jul/97-Mar/98
• Career Resource Centre	• Career Resource Centre facility to support independent job search	Jul/97-Mar/98

TABLE 1 (continued)
ACR/SI Pilot Profiles

ACR/SI Pilot: Surrey		
Clients:	All IA with some later shift in focus to Phase II/III or mutuals (each project having a somewhat different target client group)	
Services:		
Service Components	**Service Component Description**	**Duration**
• Immigrant ACR Centre	• Limited group work. Focus was placed on one-on-one counselling with individual problem solving and preparation of an Action Plan. A job developer was available to work with job ready clients. Clients were ESL.	Nov/95-Mar/97
• Job Action Workshop (JAWS I)	• Group format; ½ hour information session, 4 half days of basic level assessment (self-assessment, Holland interest testing, work interest testing) leading to an Action Plan. For multi-barriered Phase II/III clients, another 4 half days of in-depth testing (academic level, work values, personality), one-on-one counselling and Action Plan preparation.	Nov 95-Mar/97
• JAWS II	• Same as JAWS I, 8 half days and served only Phase II/III clients. Plus an independent job search resource area available to all IA clients.	Jun 97-May/98
• Phoenix Empowerment I	• Group format plus one-on-one; life skills training for youth using a non-traditional learning environment, stabilization of substance abuse issues, computer literacy training, introduction to the Internet; 1-2 month duration.	Sep/96-Mar/97
• Phoenix Empowerment II	• Same as Phoenix I, with an enhanced technology base, a focus on Internet applications, website design, and team projects in Internet programming for community groups; 2-3 month intervention; mainly IA Phase II/III clients.	Apr/97-Mar/98
• PARC	• 1 week of group interventions involving assessments in work values, personality, and diagnostics and testing of IQ, aptitude, learning style, and academic level. Plus a second week of LMI and one-on-one counselling to interpret test results, help identify barriers and develop an Action Plan. Initially, clients were Phaseless with an emphasis on youth, but part way through the focus shifted to mutual clients.	Dec/96-Mar/98

3.2 Evaluative Findings on Impacts, Effects and Outcome of ACR/SI Programming

It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between terms like "impacts," "effects" and "outcome" or "objectives achievement." All evaluations must examine each issue, but the evaluators often must apply their own working definition of the relevant term.

For us, impacts and effects are very close to the concept of *outcome*, all of which we are taking as effects on *individuals* involved, whether they be staff, planners, community partners or participants. The assessment of these impacts or outcomes is also directed to measurement in the *shorter term*. In part this is because the evaluation research has taken place relatively soon after the 11 pilot projects were completed. Thus, we only have a short timeframe over which to identify impacts and effects and assess outcome.

In contrast, we are taking "objectives achievement" as relating to the assessment of whether a *program as a whole* achieved its overall policy objectives. Thus, in that section we will be considering whether the ACR/SI achieved program-wide objectives of enhancing programming and did so through the locally determined planning and co-management processes.

The analysis of impacts, effects and outcome centres on two main respondent groups — programming developers and deliverers and participants. How did the ACR/SI affect each of them in their own particular relationship to the pilot projects?

3.2.1 Impacts on Program Developers/Deliverers

Here we include the nine Steering Committees and any contracted program deliverers. Our information comes from the interviews with these two groups and with the key respondents at the senior governmental partner levels.

First we will look at impacts on their workload as the ACR/SI was being established and implemented. Then we will look at the impact on their relationships with partners and then at the impact on contracted service providers specifically.

In terms of impacts on government partners at the Steering Committee level, the ACR/SI could be seen as a mixed blessing. On one hand, virtually all respondents from the three partners said that the development and implementation processes significantly increased their workload. The planning process tended to be very demanding, yet they were not allocated specific time away from other responsibilities to do this work. The typical comment was that they did the ACR/SI work "off the corner of my desk."

On the other hand, most respondents from the senior government levels, the Steering Committees and the front-line levels of the three partners said that they learned a great deal about the nature of each other's work. They came to recognize the constraints and opportunities that framed each other's working environment. This went from the "philosophy" of each partner ministry or department through to the funding resources, range of clients served, and day-to-day expectations for a given position. One of the

themes that emerged repeatedly from respondents could be paraphrased as "MHR wants to get people off their rolls, MAETT has to get people into jobs no matter what, and HRDC is supposed to help people find employment for the long run." This may seem to be putting it rather bluntly, and it may not be completely accurate in reality, but it is an accurate reflection of many respondents' perceptions.

What this divergence of philosophy meant for the respondents was that they sometimes felt that they were working at cross-purposes. They were glad to have a better understanding of the context in which each operated, and most felt that they had developed reasonably effective means of reconciling differences where they could. This was on an interpersonal, working level and also in terms of innovative approaches to programming, referrals and funding of services.

Several commented that they had learned more about the clients of each and what barriers they faced — which in turn would affect the nature of their own staff's work. As one federal respondent on a Steering Committee, who helped deliver Starting Points, said of this learning process:

> *For me, and I've said it over and over, it opened my eyes about people on IA. We deal with EI people who have a potential income of $400 a week and here I do a workshop for those on $400 a month! I was staggered by the issues. I'd heard about it, but never had seen what they do have as issues, what they do face, how difficult it can be to get motivated and get up and do the job search. It's not just getting a job, but you're worried that you don't have clothes for the interview, or even bus fare. So it was a real eye-opener for me.*

Since the latest form of partnership between the two levels of government is now framed by the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), respondents were also asked what impact their working together had on future prospects for working under the LMDA. Respondents were almost unanimous in saying that the experience of working together, even in those few cases where they did not achieve an effective working relationship, certainly has prepared them to work within the context of the Labour Market Development Agreement. Representatives from only one community said that they had returned to their old, separate ways of doing things, although they had worked well together during the ACR/SI. More typically, we heard comments such as:

> *ACR did have an impact on our relationship with [other government partners]. It gave us some exposure to how the different cultures were in the three different organizations. It also laid a foundation as a lead-in for co-management.*

But there were significant strains in working in this divergent context, and there were some very practical obstacles arising from it. The one that was most consistently identified was the irreconcilable approach to contracting out of services. It took an enormous amount of time and effort in community after community to work out contracting processes and content that met each partner's needs and expectations. As one government partner respondent encapsulated the situation:

We really needed, and still need, a mechanism for joint funding of a contract. Nothing works very well. We need some sort of joint bank account. As long as one [funder] holds the contract, the contractor will respond best to that [funder] and may not respond to other parties involved. There could be one service provider with two contracts — each with different services and requirements for monitoring, etc. But this has its own problems. We still don't have a joint contracting process. It is still very difficult for LMDA. LMDA is now part of our planning cycle and Assessment and Referral is part of the programming.

Of course, there was a spin-off effect for contractors, who sometimes experienced diverse or even contradictory views on what was expected of them for programming content or measurement of success in terms of contract compliance. They were sometimes met with considerable delays in contract signing, delays in payment, and contracts sometimes were discontinued for reasons that may have been clear to the partner funders but not to the contractors.

At the government staff front-line level, there were mixed responses on the impacts of the ACR/SI on workload per se. In general, HRDC staff did not find it increased their service-delivery work. Clients on EI could be sent over to an ACR/SI service if this were seen as appropriate. However, in reality, only a very small proportion of the ACR/SI client group were EI clients (current or mutuals), so the demand on front-line staff seems to have had little impact.

This was not so for MAETT front-line staff, however. Though the situation fluctuated over time, with the introduction of BC Benefits and its associated service Phases, in general MAETT Training Consultants were expected to review for approval any action plan calling for training support that was developed in an ACR/SI — typically as a result of the Starting Points intervention. When virtually all eligible IA clients were being referred, and anywhere from 50 to 90 percent in a given program developed an action plan, then MAETT staff were considerably taxed to review and approve the training plans. This changed somewhat in most locations once the BC Benefits Phases came in, because there was a considerable drop in numbers of clients, at least for a period of time.

As the reader will know, ACR/SI was planned and began to operate prior to the implementation of BC Benefits, the new Income Assistance regime for the province. Under BC Benefits, there are three Phases, each having more intensive programming available to recipients, and clients are eligible for these services only within the appropriate Phase. The first seven-month Phase is called "Independent Job Search." Clients are expected to undertake their own job-search actions, and they are not placed into programming that could assist them in this effort. During Phase II, months 8-10, clients may access services such as ACR/SI, and in Phase III, the last Phase, they may receive support to have training. With the implementation of the Phases, there were then fewer participants in a number of the pilots, and thus it might seem that there would be a diminution in the MAETT workload.

However, MAETT staff found that though they had fewer plans to approve, they had a larger job trying to locate Phase II clients to get them to come in for service. The staff at MHR would provide the names they had but could not always keep up with the exact Phase in which a person should be.[8] Sometimes the Training Consultants would take on the task of contacting the client. But the Phase II client in any case tended to be more difficult to locate and less receptive to programming. This was especially true for youth, who became the highest service priority for the provincial government. Thus, the task of MAETT to locate the individuals and refer them over to services (and then review training plans) was very time-consuming.

There was not a sense that the workload for Financial Assistance Workers at MHR was noticeably affected at the front line by the ACR/SI. Their job has evolved to focus on determination of eligibility, rather than assessment or referral for programming. The latter functions have been taken on by MAETT. Thus, once eligibility for IA benefits was determined, the client would be directed to an ACR/SI in the pilot community, and other front-line service deliverers would take over from there.

For the service providers, who were contracted from private, non-profit and public education sectors, the ACR/SI did not add to workload in an *unanticipated* manner. That is, they made their service plan, entered into the tendering process, and if they were successful, delivered the service according to the staffing and budget allocations planned.

However, as noted above, with the implementation of the Phases of BC Benefits, a major impact for service providers (and MHR staff and other service providers to whom/from whom clients could be cross-referred for services) was that the anticipated number of clients for whom their programming and budgeting were designed, was drastically reduced fairly early on in the whole process. As one of the service providers described it:

> *We initially had Starting Points classes of between 24 and 27 people twice a week. Then after the Phases came in, the numbers dropped to four people per week....When the numbers dropped off we were given the names of YouthWorks clients who had been referred to Starting Points. We would go through the list and call them, but they were not a willing group. The youth were far less likely to attend, even after we made contact with them. They were also less likely to follow through on their action plan.*

The service providers (and partner staff) also were frustrated that far fewer clients could be referred from the start of receiving IA benefits to programming that could move them closer to employability. As the previous respondent explained:

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8 It is the practice of MHR to provide a list on a monthly basis to all MAETT Regional offices of those IA clients moving into Phase II or already in Phases II or III. However, this in itself seems not to resolve these issues of sufficient information for identifying who is at what point in the system, how they may be contacted, or how much time this may take.

At the outset, we had lots of service options to refer clients to in the community. We had a whole binder filled with programs that clients could access. But within six months of our program start-up, the Phasing came in and restricted access of most of the clients to most of the services.

This limitation of access to services did not exist only as a result of BC Benefits. As one of the senior government level key respondents noted, during the early implementation stages, the federal EI legislation changed. Fewer unemployed people were eligible for these benefits, and those who were could only be covered for shorter amounts of time. Hence, their access to supported programming was less than before. As this respondent said:

It had a positive outcome, but not a super-positive one, for two reasons. One is all that mucking about with BC Benefits and what the feds did with EI really hurt clients. There were fewer clients eligible for EI, eligible for less funds, for less time, for less programs, and they had to wait longer for programming. The assessment may be done well, but these challenges hurt clients.

And also, it made me sad that the governments are more and more putting money into front-end services, and there's not enough programming for people to go to next. So in the Lower Mainland now, we find that clients are being sent for assessment three or four times, to make sure they have bus money, to keep them busy.

Turning back to service providers and the issue of pre- and post-BC Benefits conditions, a related issue for service providers who were in on the process in the pre-BC Benefits stage was that their programming had been designed for a somewhat diverse and relatively job-ready clientele. Starting Points, as we have noted, was the core programming element, and it was not designed to deal with a very high proportion of persons facing the kinds of barriers that many on IA face. Thus, when the Phases came in and the service providers were expected to serve an almost exclusively IA clientele, they ran into two problems.

One was that programming was not as appropriate as they had thought it would be. Many were able to make appropriate adaptations. This is an indication of their own skills, their consultative relationship with most of their Steering Committee members and contracting officers, and the elasticity of the ACR/SI as a whole. Yet, in the interim, and even later in programming, the service providers were being assessed for their own contract compliance on a model that did not envision such a high proportion of high-barrier clients, for whom programming was not as suitable as had been expected. Thus, their success rates fell below what was called for. There was the subsidiary problem for service deliverers that contacting such clients for follow-up purposes was even more difficult than anticipated, which also depressed the reported success rates.

It must be understood that the entire BC Benefits issue is not a difficulty inherent in the ACR/SI *programming* itself, but rather is a structural or contextual factor that dramatically shaped the implementation and outcome of the ACR/SI pilots. In general, it would have

to be said that these impacts were negative, though the innovative and determined response of the governmental partners and contracted service deliverers is to be lauded. It must also be admitted that, in a few cases, service providers simply withdrew from the field rather than continue with such a taxing process. But for the most part, all concerned made the best of a very difficult situation.

3.2.2 Impacts, Effects and Outcome on ACR/SI Participants: Findings from the Past Participant and Comparison Group Surveys

Note: Before moving to our discussion of these findings, we would like to emphasize that our analysis was quite extensive, and thus we can only present the highlights of findings here. There are also a number of methodological points that the interested reader may want to pursue, having to do with the use of comparison groups, the types of statistical analysis techniques used, etc. All of these points, plus the much more detailed account of findings are in Volume 2, and the reader is encouraged to make reading it an integral part of the review of the summary below.

We have described at some length the impacts of the ACR/SI on those who developed and delivered it, but what about those it was to serve? The primary source of data for this assessment of impact is the participants themselves. To strengthen the value of the research for assessing outcome, a participant/comparison group survey approach was used. That is, past participants were sampled from those pilot sites that could provide contact information, and a comparison group of IA recipients who had not participated in ACR/SI programming were sampled from those same communities. (Again, we refer the reader to Volume 2 for a further discussion of this approach.)

There are both experiential or "subjective" elements of the impacts and effects of programming and more "objective" or quantitative elements. In the former, we would include impacts related to feelings of satisfaction with programming or changes in levels of confidence about potential employment success. For the quantitative indicators, we will be using a definition of success that includes one or both of two outcomes — employment and/or pursuit of further education or training.

As we will discuss in the Alternatives section later, there is not an ACR-wide working definition of "success." There are three different government partners and each have different mandates, different expectations or requirements of clients, and therefore different ways of defining or measuring successful outcome. Indeed, as we will also show from the interviews, measurement of successful outcome is a challenge for each, due not only to imprecise criteria in some cases but also to insufficient tracking data.

However, *faute de mieux*, we will be using the relatively straightforward, but rather narrow, definition of successful outcome as employment/further education or training.

The richness of the survey findings makes for a rather long report, but in the interest of brevity of Volume 1, we will be presenting the highlights of the results immediately below.

The ACR Experience: Participation Patterns and Experiential Impacts

There were 454 past participants in ACR/SI pilots who were interviewed. These were telephone interviews, with findings recorded immediately through a computerized interviewing system. Some responses were pre-coded and some were coded subsequently. Analysis included uni-variate and multi-variate techniques, including ultimately the use of logistic regression analysis.

First we look at the main features of actual participation in the pilot projects.

Programming Participation:

- Ninety-one percent of the 454 ACR/SI respondents surveyed had participated in the Starting Points component of the ACR/SI, with the remaining respondents naming a number of other programs attended (Job Action Workshops, Career Planning, Job Options, etc.).

- About one-third of the sample (34 percent) had participated in more than one component of the ACR/SI.

- More than 9 in 10 of the respondents (91 percent) completed the ACR/SI programming in which they participated.

- Of the 381 respondents who completed Starting Points, more than half (59 percent) said they completed an Action Plan and most of these respondents said they followed through on their Action Plan (66 percent) or were still working on it (12 percent).

Experiential Impacts:

The experiential impacts of the ACR/SI participation were generally positive for respondents. They learned more about the labour market, and their confidence in their employability tended to increase, as the following highlights show.

Impacts on ACR/SI participants' knowledge of LMI

An important element of enhanced employability is increased knowledge of the labour market and thus, how best to fit into it. Respondents were asked whether they had acquired a greater awareness of information resources about several aspects of labour market information.

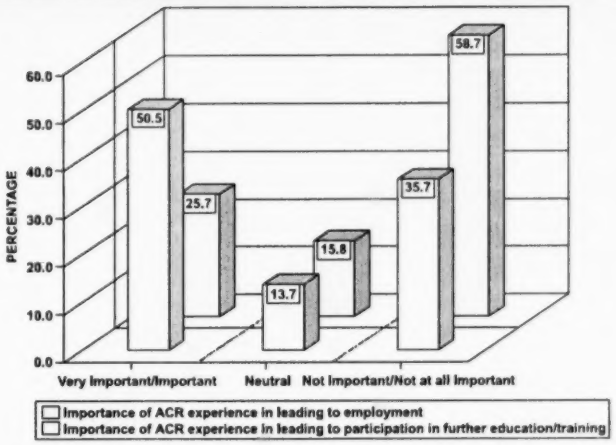
- A majority of respondents said the ACR/SI services they received had increased their awareness of information resources about three main elements of the labour market. The proportion of ACR past participants affirming that the ACR had this impact was: 1) local job opportunities (62 percent), 2) training requirements (56 percent), and 3) information on the changing job market (55 percent).

Impacts on participants' employability
(Past participants with successful outcomes)

The next level of analysis was a comparison of the experiential impacts of those past participants who had successful outcomes (employment or further training/education) and those who had not.

For those with successful outcomes, the relevant questions here were whether the respondent felt the ACR experience was an important factor in achieving employment or further training. They were also asked a series of questions about their future employability, in terms of job retention, changing to upgrade their position in their current workplace, and ability to find other comparable or even better positions elsewhere if they were interested in doing so. The findings follow in figures 2, 3 and 4.

FIGURE 2
Importance of ACR Experience for Those with Successful Outcomes



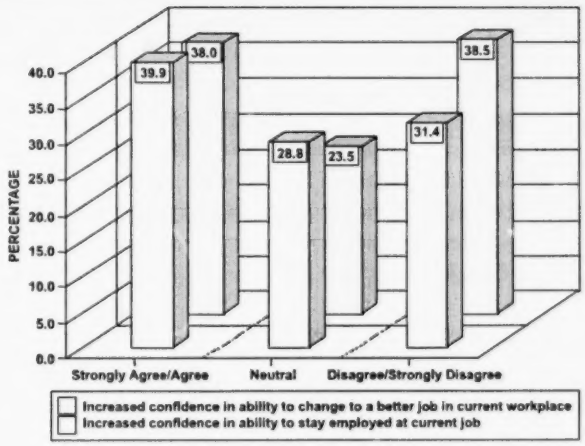
Almost 60 percent of the respondents indicated that the ACR experience was not at all important, but 60 percent of the responses were located on the other end of the continuum.

With reference to the importance of the ACR experience in leading to respondents' participation in further training or education, half of the responses fell within the positive two choices. Just over 35 percent fell within the two negative response choices.

As for the impacts on their employment situation once they have found a job, the findings are:

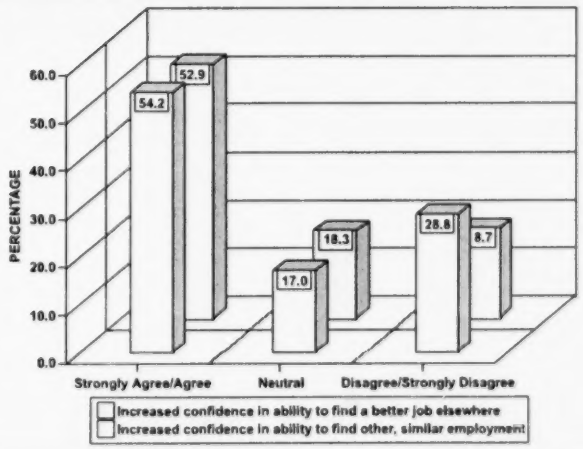
In terms of the impact of the ACR experience on confidence in their ability to advance in their current workplace, nearly 40 percent of ACR respondents who were employed after the ACR/SI strongly agreed or agreed that their confidence had increased because of the ACR services they received. The same proportion chose one of the two "disagree" responses.

FIGURE 3
Participants' Confidence in Their Employability —
Current Employment: Those with Successful Outcomes



As for the impact of the ACR experience on respondents' confidence in their ability to retain their current employment, when the aggregated two "agree" choices and the two "disagree" ones are examined, in each case, close to 40 percent of respondents fell at either pole of the scale.

FIGURE 4
Participants' Confidence in Their Employability —
Future Employment: Those with Successful Outcomes



As for the questions about impacts on confidence to find other, similar or better employment elsewhere in future, we find that the ACR experience is rated positively by a larger proportion of those responding. More than half (54 percent) of the respondents who were employed after the ACR/SI strongly agreed or agreed that they had increased confidence in their ability to find other, similar employment because of the ACR services they received.

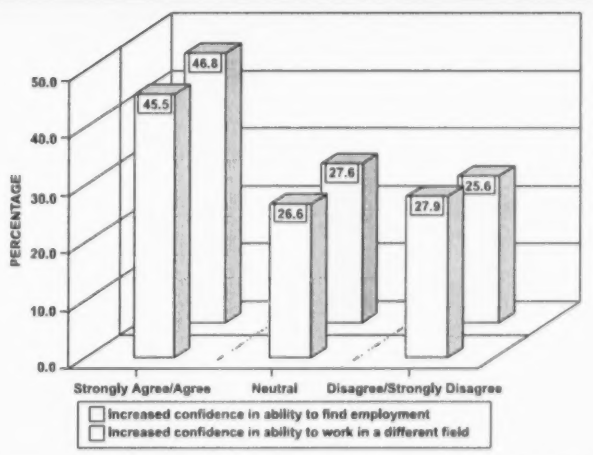
A small majority (53 percent) of the respondents who were employed after the ACR/SI strongly agreed or agreed that they had increased confidence in their ability to find a better job because of the ACR services they received.

In sum, we see that there is not an overwhelming majority of the past participants with successful outcomes who attribute their successful outcomes or enhanced employability to the ACR experience. Of course, the ACR is a brief intervention and unless there was a strong preponderance of negative responses, these findings do not seem to be disquieting.

Impacts on participants' confidence in their employability
(Past participants with unsuccessful outcomes)

It is interesting that those respondents who had not become employed or pursued further training at the time of their interview were proportionately more positive about the impacts of the ACR experience on their employability. Increased confidence in finding employment or finding work in a different field if they so chose in future, shows this.

FIGURE 5
Participants' Confidence in Their Employability: Those with Unsuccessful Outcomes



The figure shows that almost half (47 percent) of the respondents who had not been employed since their ACR/SI experience agreed or strongly agreed that the confidence they had in their ability to find employment had increased as a result of the ACR services they participated in. Just under 26 percent had one of the two negative responses.

A little less than half (45 percent) of the respondents who had not been employed since their ACR/SI experience agreed or strongly agreed that the ACR services they received had increased the confidence they had in their ability to find employment in a different field, if they wanted to do this. Just under 28 percent selected one of the two negative responses.

Thus, the ACR experience is perceived by a substantial proportion of the unsuccessful respondents as having a positive impact even though they had not yet achieved employment or gone on to further training.

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Highlights of Findings on Outcome: ACR/SI Participants versus the Comparison Group

It is important to examine the experiential impacts of ACR participation. These are difficult to measure precisely, but they do contribute to an understanding of how a program affects participants, at least in the relatively short term. Perceptions shape action, so these must be explored.

Ultimately, an individual or funder or service delivery contractor must know — does participation in a program itself actually have economically measurable benefits that the participant would not have received otherwise? Does the program work, or would the outcome have been the same without it? Thus, we must closely examine employment/training outcome by comparing participants and non-participants.

The analysis of employment outcome was an iterative process, moving from comparisons between the total of respondents in each group to an increasingly refined set of sub-samples and the use of more intensive analytical techniques. The full report in Volume 2 gives a detailed account of each approach, with many tables of data for review by the reader. There were 401 respondents in the comparison group of IA recipients drawn from eight of the same communities in which a pilot project was implemented and 454 past participants drawn from the same communities.

We will present here findings from the analysis of a sub-sample of each group. This sub-sample was used to ensure the closest possible match between the two groups overall — past participants and comparison. These sub-samples consisted of 273 ACR past participants and 231 comparison sub-group members. They were matched as rigorously as possible on a number of variables. Using the ACR participants as the base for comparison, the ACR sub-group of past participants was to have had a minimum of 24 weeks elapsed since participation. The comparison sub-group was then matched on not having participated in any employment-related programming during this period and not to be significantly different from the ACR group in terms of their distribution along the demographic variables of gender, age, education, marital status, or dependants in the household.

The success indicators first examined are: employed or not during the study period, attending school or training, and the two indicators combined. Then we will examine two other key employment-related outcomes — duration of employment and income levels.

Finally, we will present the findings on the impact of the ACR on outcome, as derived from the logistic regression analysis.

Comparison of Rates of Successful Outcomes: The Two Sub-Groups

The variables that were examined in the more intensive stage of analysis were success in finding employment, going on for further training, duration of employment and rate of pay. Many more variables were analyzed, but again the reader is referred to Volume 2.

Employment Outcomes for the Two Sub-groups During the Study Period

Figure 6 presents the numbers and proportions of respondents from the ACR and comparison sub-groups who were employed at some time during the study period.

FIGURE 6
Employed During Study Period

Any employment during the study period *	ACR Sub-group (N = 273)		Comparison Sub-group (N = 231)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Yes	154	56.4%	81	35.1%
No	119	43.6%	150	64.9%
VALID N	273	100%	231	100%

* This relationship is statistically significant at 0.05.

Over half (56 percent) of the ACR sub-group were employed at some time after their ACR experience. This is significantly more than the proportion (35 percent) of comparison sub-group respondents who were employed at some time during the study period.

Some respondents who were employed during the study period had been employed more than once during that time or had held two or more jobs at the same time. In fact, the total 235 respondents from the two groups who said they were employed during the study period had found a total of 302 jobs over the maximum time of two years for our study period. ACR sub-group respondents held about two-thirds of the total jobs (68 percent) and comparison sub-group respondents the other one-third (32 percent). Thus, at this general level of simply finding employment, the ACR sub-group had a more successful outcome.

Further Education or Training of the Sub-Groups

We will now turn to an examination of any education or training (other than short-term employment-related training like the ACR) that sub-group respondents participated in during the study period. Figure 7 presents the numbers and proportions of respondents from the ACR Sub-group and Comparison Sub-group who attended education or training during the study period.

FIGURE 7
Attendance of Sub-Groups in Education or Training During Study Period

Attended education or training during the study period *	ACR Sub-group (N = 273)		Comparison Sub-group (N = 231)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Yes	113	41.4%	52	22.5%
No	160	58.6%	179	77.5%
VALID N	273	100%	231	100%

* This relationship is statistically significant at 0.05.

About 4 in 10 ACR sub-group respondents (41 percent) had attended an education or training program after their ACR experience, significantly more than the one-quarter comparison sub-group (22.5 percent). Thus, this indicates an appreciably higher rate of success for the ACR sub-group on this education/training outcome variable.

Further analysis of the types of training undertaken showed a substantive difference between the groups in terms of the types and levels of education or training they attended during the study period. An appreciably larger proportion of respondents from the ACR sub-group (63 percent) than the comparison sub-group (39 percent) participated in programming that may be considered more substantive; that is, a grade 12 diploma, a post-secondary diploma or degree, or a longer term skills training program generally offering recognized accreditation upon completion.

Conversely, a larger proportion of the comparison sub-group respondents (59 percent) than the ACR sub-group (33 percent) had attended "short" programs, which last from a few hours to a few months and cover general skills, job search, ESL and those skills that take a limited time to develop, e.g., traffic flagging.

It is clear, then, that the ACR sub-group has a more successful outcome in terms of pursuing more advanced education and training. (It must be remembered, of course, that the ACR group as a whole has higher educational levels and thus could move more readily into more advanced training.)

Duration of Employment for the Sub-Groups

In considering duration of employment, because respondents often had more than one job over the study period, the analysis is based on the 302 jobs and not the 235 respondents. Thus, in Figure 8 we will speak of the number of these jobs related to variables under consideration and not the number of respondents.

The number of weeks each job respondents held during the study period are presented in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8 Duration of the Employment				
Duration of Employment *	**ACR Sub-group (N = 204 Jobs)**		**Comparison Sub-group (N = 98 Jobs)**	
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Less than 10 weeks	36	20.0%	15	17.0%
10 — 26 weeks	51	28.3%	32	36.4%
27 — 52 weeks	44	24.4%	16	18.2%
53 — 104 weeks	37	20.6%	11	12.5%
105 weeks or more	12	6.7%	14	15.9%
VALID N	180	100%	88	100%
Average length of employment (weeks)	58.5		87.3	
* This relationship is statistically significant at 0.05.				

The individual jobs held by ACR sub-group respondents during the study period lasted an average of 59 weeks (about 13.5 months), significantly less than the 87 weeks (20 months) for each job that respondents in the comparison sub-group had held.

More than three-quarters (80 percent) of the ACR sub-group respondent jobs lasted 10 weeks or longer, slightly less than the 83 percent of those jobs held by comparison sub-group respondents.

We looked further into this finding, because it seemed incongruous, given the higher employment rates of ACR participants and other positive employability findings for that group. We learned that the comparison group's jobs, though lasting longer, tended more often than those of the ACR sub-group to be part-time (80 percent), low-skill jobs (75 percent at NOC skill levels C or D). (They also paid at very low levels.) It appears that the comparison sub-group were able to retain these jobs for considerable periods of time, but the jobs are of less "quality" than those held by the ACR group.

Rates of Pay for the Sub-Groups

Respondents were asked what rate of pay they received when working. The responses to this question were recorded in verbatim form to reflect the true basis on which they were paid, i.e., so many dollars per month or so much per hour. Some respondents simply replied "it varies" and some others refused to answer (which is common in surveys when asking people for information about incomes). Therefore, the number of respondents for whom this information is available is less than that for the other variables. All readily quantifiable responses were subsequently standardized into dollars per hour and are presented in Figure 9.

FIGURE 9 Rates of Pay for Employment				
Rate of pay *	**ACR-IA Group (N = 204 Jobs)**		**Comparison-IA Group (N = 98 Jobs)**	
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
$7 — $10 dollars/hour	83	55.0%	53	68.8%
$11 — $15 dollars/hour	38	25.2%	16	20.8%
$16 dollars or more/hour	30	19.9%	8	10.4%
VALID N	151	100%	77	100%
Average rate of pay per hour	$12.88		$10.65	
* This relationship is statistically significant at 0.05.				

The average rate of pay received by ACR sub-group respondents is about $12.88 per hour for each job, significantly higher than the approximately $10.65 per hour for the comparison sub-group.

When looking at the distribution of rates of pay within the three hourly wage ranges in Figure 9, about one-fifth (20 percent) of the jobs in the ACR sub-group paid $16 per hour or more compared with one-tenth (10 percent) of the jobs that the comparison sub-group held. More ACR sub-group respondents (25 percent) than those from comparison sub-group (21 percent) had jobs that paid between $11 and $15 per hour. More than half (55 percent) of ACR sub-group were paid $10 per hour or less compared with more than two-thirds of the comparison sub-group (69 percent) at this pay level. These differences are statistically significant. Thus we see that the ACR group had a substantially more successful outcome in terms of rates of pay.

Thus, the success level of ACR participants in terms of pay levels is significantly higher than that of non-participants, even if the duration of jobs may be shorter.

Findings on Successful Outcome from the Logistic Regression Analysis

We have presented findings from the surveys on a uni-variate level, i.e., a description of the basic distributions of the variables, and on a bi-variate level, i.e., what is the relationship between two variables, such as the demographic characteristics of respondents who find employment compared with those who do not. Now we will present an examination of the data on a multi-variate level. This entails exploring the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more potentially explanatory variables.

For our purposes, the dependent or *outcome* variable of interest is "success," as defined by whether or not the respondent found work or participated in further education or training during the study period. When the outcome variable is dichotomous as it is here (found work, did not find work; trained or not), and the purpose of the analysis is to try to explain what variables predict the outcome, the statistical tool most appropriate for use is logistic regression.

In looking at the explanatory variables, the one that is of most interest to this study is whether or not participation in ACR/SI programming is a good predictor of this successful outcome. We have already discovered that during our period of interest, significantly more ACR respondents than those from the comparison group found employment, and significantly more attended further education or training. But one of the benefits of moving to a multi-variate level of analysis is that it allows us to examine more rigorously the effect on the outcome variable of this explanatory variable, as well as other explanatory variables, to determine which of them work together to contribute to, or predict, successful outcome.

In addition to group membership, that is, whether an ACR or comparison group respondent, the other explanatory variables that were used for these analyses are: gender, age, education, marital status, number of dependants in the household and previous volunteer work.

We carried out two logistic regression analyses. First was our analysis *within* the ACR/SI sample and then *between* the selected ACR (N=273) and comparison (N=231) sub-group samples.

Results from the logistic regression analysis of data on the sub-groups of ACR and comparison respondents showed that those respondents who had participated in the ACR/SI were about *four times more likely* to have been employed or to have participated in further education or training, during the study time. If in addition, ACR participants have dependant children over six years old at home or are younger than 45 years of age, they have increased chances of successful outcomes.

It is clear from all levels of analysis that the ACR/SI does have an appreciable positive impact on participants, in terms of increasing the potential for achieving employment and/or pursuing further education and training. It also enhances their confidence in their ability to find or retain employment. We assume this confidence interacts synergistically with the more quantifiable positive outcomes of finding employment or taking further education/training.[9]

3.2.3 Summary of Findings on Impacts, Effects and Outcome of the ACR/SI

While the ACR/SI has not been without its difficulties, overall the impacts and effects have been positive. For the program developers and managers among the government partners it had benefits for meeting their goals for services to clients, for learning to work together (which has been a useful precursor to their recent move into the Labour Market

[9] In that motivation for participation may be a factor to be taken into account in analysis, we point out that this is not necessary in this case because both the participant and comparison group members for this sub-sample analysis are required to participate in programming. Some will have been directed to the pilots and some not. Those who were not would be in the comparison group. Hence, compensating in the analysis for motivation is not called for, as it is intrinsic to the behaviour. It also is not measurable, which further makes such analytical adjustment immaterial.

Development Agreement co-management/co-funding framework), and for learning more about each other's client group and how to work with them. The workload of management during the planning stages was increased, but once the pilots were fully implemented, this seems to have been reduced. The workload for many of the local MAETT Training Consultants was increased, at least sporadically, but this was not uniformly so.

For service deliverers the impacts were more mixed. On an individual, local level, the working relationships with government partners tended to be positive, and contractors generally felt the programming models they developed and delivered were good ones. On the other hand, the introduction of the service Phases under BC Benefits (starting mid-1996) tended to have negative effects on service providers (and clients). The flow of potential clients was interrupted and seriously reduced in some cases, resulting in considerable strain on the on-going business operations of a number of contractors. Clients who were being served before sometimes then had to wait months for service, and many who had just come into the system and completed Starting Points could not access follow-up services for as many as seven more months (if they had not yet found employment by that time). This disruption of the continuity of services was seen by all as detrimental to both clients and service providers.

The survey results are clear that participation in the ACR/SI is beneficial. It enhances the participants' knowledge of the labour market and increases their confidence in their employability (ability to find, retain or change jobs). When compared with non-participants, it is equally clear that ACR/SI participation increases by a factor of four the likelihood of a successful outcome, defined as finding employment and/or pursuing further education or training.

3.3 Evaluative Findings on Objectives Achievement for the ACR/SI as a Whole

As stated earlier, the objectives against which achievement is being measured are those set out for the ACR/SI as a whole. These are largely process objectives, in that they have to do with *how* the ACR/SI is to be developed and implemented. As the original program documentation stated, for the ACR/SI, the objective was to:

> *...test and demonstrate an **enhanced** assessment, counselling and referral system for people on income support. It is expected to improve the linkages within and between employment programs, the individual on income support and the labour market.*

Furthermore, the means by which the ACR/SI itself was to develop was through:

> *...a delegation of joint planning, design, service delivery and accountability responsibilities to the government partners with an equal opportunity for input for each...it was at the local level where much of the responsibility for planning [etc.] of enhanced [ACR] programs and processes was intended to take place.*

The evaluative question is, to what degree has the ACR/SI achieved these objectives? The answer to this question must identify successes and note any significant impediments to success. We begin with a consideration of the planning process, starting at the senior-most levels of the ACR/SI. Then we turn to the planning process in the field, and then explore whether the resultant programming did meet the objective of being *enhanced* programming that improved the linkages within and between employment programs.

3.3.1 Initiative-Wide Objectives for Partnership in Planning and Implementation

The respondents at the senior governmental levels generally felt the joint planning process worked "well" to "very well" (they were asked to use between three and four on a four-point scale as a first response and then to elaborate on the reasons for their choice). As for activities at their own level, a typical comment was:

> *It wasn't just the co-chairs [at the provincial/federal senior management levels], there was a real determination on everyone's part to do the right thing with this initiative and make it work. We recognized the limitations of the three organizations, and a lot of respect was given to all members of the Committee. We tried to make everyone feel equal.*

This same respondent stated, however, that there was room for improvement in communication among the three partners and between the senior headquarters levels and the Steering Committees and their own local staff. As this respondent said:

> *We need to spend more time to plan out the communication among all three partners. The Canada/BC Steering Committee would send out e-mails to all the provincial area managers and HRCCs, to ensure coordination of information releases. But if the area person was away then the information wouldn't get shared when it should have been. So people would get inquiring phone calls about the ACR information, but some of the people would still be in the dark. There were also competing priorities in the field, which caused difficulties in scheduling meetings.*

In considering how the partnerships and planning worked at the local community level, however, the perspectives were more mixed — whether from the senior key respondents or the local governmental Steering Committee members themselves. In general, respondents felt that most of the nine Steering Committees made significant efforts to learn to work together in the planning and implementation of the ACR/SI. It was often a struggle to succeed, however.

Part of the difficulty was "structural," in that the three government partners were differently involved at the outset. That is, funding came from the federal government, matched by MAETT. The Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) was not a signatory to the original agreement and did not contribute funds. Thus, there was a sense of "inequality" as several respondents put it.

Yet at the same time, MHR is the ministry whose clients are by far the greatest number being served, and the goal of moving persons from IA into employment operated as the primary impetus for the program, at policy levels. As has been noted, with BC Benefits, attendance at an ACR/SI in communities where it was available was a condition of compliance for receiving IA benefits (for those who were designated as "employable"). Thus, MHR had a considerable vested interest in the ACR/SI, but had a rather ambiguous place in the process.

This structural ambiguity seemed to be reflected in the planning and implementation at the local pilot project levels. In perhaps a third of the communities, the participation of representatives from MHR at the Steering Committee level was more modest than that of the other two partners. Attendance was not as regular and on-going participation in the development and management of contracts was more limited. There were also fairly consistent reports of strains between MHR staff on the one hand and MAETT and HRDC on the other. These comments were made in the context of what respondents described as the philosophical divergence of purposes and modes of operating of the three government partners.

In the majority of cases, however, the intergovernmental collaboration was balanced, and even if there were initial difficulties, these were generally resolved. As one MHR respondent described the evolution of this process, in what was a typical comment:

> *I feel it has been a positive experience working with the other two partners. On a local level, the Committee has been really dedicated. We're comfortable with each other and can function well as a group. I think we have accomplished a great deal. We have all been willing to put in the time and we all struggled through the collaborative evaluation [a separate evaluation effort, done on a pilot basis earlier in the ACR/SI] when we could have scrapped it. We've always worked with MAETT and when they came with the ACR money and asked what was needed, it was an ideal kind of situation to share funding and provide services to our mutual clients.*
>
> *Another positive aspect is that we could plan and run things on our own. Some things were clear, but there is a comfort in running your own things and being allowed to solve problems as they came along.*

The service providers for the most part found their own experience of the relations among the partner ministries to be relatively smooth and positive. However, there were some strains that existed in some communities among the various government partners that were commented upon by a few service providers. They found that the lack of governmental partner cooperation in some cases was reflected in inconsistencies of treatment that their own clients received, either upon being referred to their service or upon being referred out to the respective partners for follow-up, further information, etc. And we have already mentioned the difficulties some service providers had in the development of programming or contracting processes. To some degree these arose not only from the structural ambiguities but also from the interpersonal strains that could reflect these unclear and sometimes rapidly changing expectations with which partners and service providers had to deal.

The important point to note is the inherent structural strains that can arise when partners do not have in common certain conditions that are essential for collaborative, efficient planning. Shared mandates, equal resources for all, and harmonized component practices (such as contracting) were mentioned by a number of respondents as desirable conditions that would have facilitated the planning and implementation process.

As one respondent put it:

> *If we were going about this again, it would really be useful to have a better definition of roles; like what our objective is for the clients and what the province's is...we had totally different objectives and right there there was conflict. If we were to meet our objectives, it wouldn't be any help to the province.*

A respondent at the senior government level had suggestions about how to achieve a smoother collaboration in future initiatives. The respondent said:

> *The lesson learned here is that there is a need to do more up-front development and provide supports for Committees on how to form partnerships. Workshops would have worked well. They were done on an informal basis when we would visit the sites at the beginning and we could provide informal support along the way. But this could have been done more formally and we could have offered partners training in the process, and given them techniques that would be helpful for collaborative situations.*

Another aspect of Initiative-wide objective achievement is the whole issue of adequate record-keeping, quality of databases, monitoring processes, etc. This could be seen as the partnership in "accountability responsibilities" cited in the overall objectives set out earlier. This is because recording and databases are crucial elements of accountability.

It must be said that there were several challenges that service providers and government partners faced in monitoring and recording program participation and progress. First, to go right back to the three-partner effects, the different partners had different reporting requirements. The MHR needed monitoring and reporting of compliance for its clients — whether they attended Starting Points, for example. MAETT had reporting requirements about attendance in programming or employment outcome. The federal government tended more to client self-reporting, because the whole structure of expectations of federal clients is different than the IA model. Each partner had different forms, and a single contractor might have to fill out each, depending on the client profile.

This is challenge enough, but perhaps the greater one is simply getting the data on the clients. Since the vast majority of clients are IA recipients, it is generally accepted that they tend to be fairly difficult to reach for follow-up. They may not be where there is a phone. They may not be comfortable using a phone. They are often quite mobile. They may not welcome calls to find out if they are doing what they are supposed to do. Furthermore, returning to the effects of BC Benefits, once the ACR/SI pilots were to concentrate on Phase II clients, these persons are even more likely to be marginalized and less likely to be reachable by any ordinary means.

Thus, reporting is very difficult. We have already spoken about the implications this has for contractors in terms of meeting contract requirements. They almost certainly cannot capture the full extent of their success, however modest it might be for the given client group. Lack of these data also has an effect on the government partners, in terms of determining program effectiveness; i.e., how many people have actually been moved off these support programs, and can this be related to the intervention? As a Steering Committee member described this situation:

> *If there is one main problem with ACR...it is in tracking clients after they have developed their action plans, and another is some criteria on which to measure program success. This is something that should have been developed at the beginning*

Another Steering Committee member in a different location said:

> *There was no tracking system. We asked contractors to track client progress in some way. But this was not a well-defined or simple task. Contractors were required to give us a 90-day follow-up report on clients. This required the contractor staff to make contact attempts, but with transient clients it is difficult and some IA clients have no phones, so it is not simple to reach many clients....We did have verbal reports every second month and a quarterly written progress report. The verbal presentation covered how many clients have received services and how the program was going.*

It can be seen that even with regular reporting of contractor activity, there is little or no ability at the project level to report on outcome — however that may be defined.

Consider too, the dilemma for evaluators who, after all, are trying to answer for the funders the exact questions they need to know about program success. Between the difficulty of contacting clients, and the fact that many of the ACR/SI services are not amenable to precise counting of clients — a career centre that serves drop-in clients, for example — the amount and quality of data available from programming records and from the government partners themselves are limited.

It would take rather intensive and vastly expensive means to improve the amount or quality of client data, we believe. However, the limitations of data for program monitoring and further accountability must be faced squarely. In the face of these limitations, there are other means of collecting useful data, and the telephone surveys of past participants are one example, but even that method is complicated by the nature of the data available at service and government levels. Also, this level of tracking or follow-up cannot be done continually by the program itself.

There are also considerations of privacy and freedom of information related to government databases. As one senior respondent explained:

> *It is so difficult to do the system stuff [maintain a client tracking system] with another ministry, given the current Freedom of Information legislation. The first step is to*

ensure that our own system is a good one. Each of the three partners need to work on our own system. We each have our own problems.

3.3.2 Initiative-Wide Objectives for Enhancing ACR Services and Improving Linkages Within and Among Employment Programs

It is evident from the interviews with the full range of respondents that the ACR/SI has achieved the objective of *enhancing* existing ACR services, by one of two means. One means was by adapting existing services in some way, to add value to them. Examples include adding a follow-up support element after assessment, or providing more intensive assessment through the use of standardized interest and aptitude tests, or providing short-term psychological counselling about employment barriers that have been identified.

The other means is by introducing a service that is either new in itself or new to the given community. Learner supports, workshops in anger management or budgeting, special LMI sessions for local labour market conditions, ESL for professionals — any or all of these were established based on identification of service needs for the client group. Of course, depending on the community, any of the five components and the particular service delivered may be either an adaptation to an existing service or a new service that fills an identified gap.

Also, it is worth noting that in some communities, or some areas of larger communities, it was reported that no ACR services of any sort existed, so anything the ACR/SI brought to the table was new for that location.

Whatever the particular permutations of services, respondents reported only one or two services (not whole contracts, just service components) that already existed in a community. These examples were in larger communities that already had a great range of services, so it would be difficult to come up with something totally new. Even then, the funder had not made heavy use of the programming elsewhere, so it still was a response to identified need.

It is clear then, that the ACR/SI has achieved the objective of delivering *enhanced* services, based on the assessment of available local programming and local client needs. Services were planned, or modified along the way, to meet these needs in a strategic, value-added manner.

The other element of this objective is whether the ACR/SI improved linkages within and among employment programs. At the planning stage, community agencies that provided a range of employment-related services were often consulted at an informal level about what they provided. The Steering Committees did compile service inventories, and this more formal information resource was supplemented by the extensive familiarity that local government partners tend to have with the community of service providers. Thus, the ACR/SI did not "need to" improve linkages between government and other services, because these linkages already were well-established.

But the ACR/SI has, after all, a *referral* component, and that is referral to employment-related services. The ACR/SI pilots did tend to strengthen linkages between clients and these services and to enhance the linkages among the services themselves, because referral out to services was a natural sequel to the assessment process.

Having said this, however, there were two impediments to the enhancement of linkages through the referral process. One was the *occasional* situation where a multi-service agency delivering ACR/SI services tended to refer clients to its own services rather than to others in the community. There was some ambiguity among respondents who described this situation as to whether there was an actual self-referral pattern going on, or whether it simply appeared to be so, because it would have been a very easy and logical thing for a larger service to do. In either case, it was a concern that was raised in a few communities. Government partners seemed to flag this as an issue fairly quickly and took steps to prevent its continuation, if they were sure that it was a genuine problem. For example, in one community, a condition of holding the ACR/SI contract was that the service provider not hold any others with that funder for related services.

The other impediment is the now familiar BC Benefits Phase problem. Once the Phases came in, service deliverers were not to refer any existing Phase I clients to other services. In the transition period, this severely reduced linkages for the clients and service providers to other employment-related services. In a small number of cases the service provider was allowed to continue serving Phase I clients, under an informal agreement, but even then, the next service provider could not follow through on someone who was still in Phase I. Thus, a smooth flow of clients from assessment to other services was decidedly impeded. Also, since the number of Phase II clients tends to be smaller than those in Phase I, and since Phase II clients are harder to contact and less likely to attend programming, this means fewer linkages for them with employment services and less cross-referral among other services of ACR/SI clients.

3.3.3 Summary of Findings on ACR/SI-Wide Objectives Achievement

The objective of developing partnerships at all government levels to plan for and implement the ACR/SI has largely been met. There has been considerable time, effort, and personal dedication invested at all levels in achieving this objective, throughout the evolution of the ACR/SI pilot projects. (In several communities these efforts, as embodied in the Steering Committees, have continued under the aegis of the LMDA.) The majority of communities developed positive, collaborative processes for planning and implementation. These efforts were not without their difficulties, as partners with diverse philosophies and modes of operation learned to work together. But most managed quite well and reported that the process itself enhanced their own understanding of each other's work, and of the clients when each had previously served separately.

The programming delivered indeed *enhanced* rather than *duplicated* existing ACR services. The local Committees were careful to identify needs that were not being met and to work with the service-providing community to develop programming that was adapted

specifically to those needs. They worked within the framework of the five programming options set out for the ACR/SI and developed innovative means that met their client profile, budget, and local service resource base.

The objective of improving linkages among government partners and employment-related services and between clients and these services was not achieved to the same degree. This was largely due to structural constraints. The primary difficulty was that the change to serving Phase II clients on IA limited the ability of ACR/SI service providers to refer to these services. Also, when clients were in Phase II they often were less accessible in the first place or less willing to utilize these services. There was a minor issue of multi-service agencies not referring clients to outside services as much as they might have — or at least this was a perception in some cases — but government partners took corrective measures if the concern seemed grounded in fact.

3.4 Program Rationale — Is There a Continuing Need for Services and Is the ACR/SI Approach the Optimal One?

So far, the ACR/SI pilot projects have been described and then their impacts, effects and outcome were assessed. This was followed by an evaluation of the degree to which the ACR/SI has met its initiative-wide objectives. It is time now to begin to address the two future-oriented evaluation issues — first, the rationale for such programming and, in the following section, alternatives/future directions.

It is important to consider the issue of rationale, because the essential elements of it are whether there is a need for the kind of program being evaluated and if so, whether this particular program is an effective and efficient way to meet these needs.

First, is there an on-going need for the ACR/SI, in terms of both its content and the way it is managed (which would include planning and implementation)?

The full range of respondents said that there is an on-going need for ACR-type functions, and most added that the way it had been done is a process that should be continued. The tendency was for senior government respondents to speak to the "big picture" of policy and funding mechanisms, while the community-based respondents spoke more to their local situations.

Typical of the senior government responses about programming content that meets client needs are:

> *A good assessment is critical so we can offer the right counselling and make the right referrals. We are still a long way from where we want to be on this one. But in general, we have to consider that the client has changed over the period since ACR was conceived. Before ACR we did not have to deal with the stereotypical situation of a 40 year old with low literacy who has been downsized out of the forest industry. Whether an EI or IA client, the issues surrounding their situation, needs and reasons*

for not being attached to the labour force have changed. We need to develop a better understanding of these issues and to develop appropriate assessment tools and programs to meet these changing needs.

As for the mechanisms of such programming, these senior respondents felt that the collaborative approach, with co-funding and co-management, is definitely the way to go to meet needs best. Typical of these comments are:

Yes, ACR-type activities were happening with all of the partners and there will continue to be a need. I like the separate pot of money that the local offices can tap into and this should work very well in a co-managed environment. I like the local Committees having the authority to make decisions, working with the regional steering committee.

This respondent continued:

There is a need to continue the kind of changes to services in response to client needs. We need some provision for SI-type work...the opportunity to support experiments to improve service to clients and to support the opportunity to be innovative in terms of local decisions and to test our delivery approach to see if new concepts work better.

Turning to the views from the field, it is evident that respondents feel there are a number of reasons why there will continue to be a need for ACR functions. They comment on the changing job market, on the change in client profile to a greater proportion with more intense and diverse barriers to employment. Some comments that illustrate these perspectives are:

— *Certainly there will be more and more need. There is a need for ACR at a whole new level with multi-barriered clients. Certainly we're seeing a change in the labour market that increases the demand for this type of service for clients who are coming on the system more often and having to change jobs more often. It's a good format to let people who are unemployed know that they have to change their way of looking at work and looking for work in the long term.*

— *Yes, because it's not a standard program, it is not a program repeating what other programs are doing — the résumés, the job search stuff. There are very few programs that help a person clarify their path. Once that has been done, the rest is easy; it's defining the path that's useful....[but] it should be offered right away...[and] there is a need for additional resources for follow-up.*

— *In our region we need ACR services for our clients. We also feel that we need joint programming and joint management of these ACR programs. That is why we have maintained an ACR Steering Committee and continue to fund ACR activities in our region. Also, if the government decides to do away with IA Phases, it will be more critical to determine how we allocate funds so that those clients who need the services most get the services.*

There were only two instances where respondents said that there was not a need for ACR-type programming. In one case the numbers of available clients did not support the effort. In the other, it was one of the few communities where these kinds of services already existed, and what was undertaken through ACR/SI did not build upon them and thus were a form of duplication.

3.4.1 Summary of Findings on Program Rationale

There is clearly a need for ACR-type services, given that there is an increasing proportion of individuals who have substantial barriers to planning their moves toward independence from support programming. The economic downturn of the province in several key sectors, the increased competitiveness of the labour market, and the changing profile of the unemployed and those on IA for extended periods, all lead respondents to the conclusion that this type of programming will continue to be essential.

Though there have been difficulties in working out the collaborative model of planning and management, respondents in general feel that the principle of drawing on local planning to determine needs and to develop and allocate services should be maintained in future. Local control of significant decision making is seen as an integral part of that approach.

Thus, there is a need for these types of services and every likelihood that the partnership approach to planning and implementation is, overall, quite effective. The approach seems to be fully justified, even if it has its difficulties. Given that respondents learned a great deal about the clientele, about responsive programming, and about working together to plan and implement it, most feel that they are well placed to move ahead along the same lines. Many already are, under the framework of the LMDA and through innovative use of other funding envelopes.

3.5 Evaluative Findings on Alternatives/Future Directions for Programming

In addressing the evaluation issue of alternatives for programming, which implies directions programming might take in the future, respondents spoke in terms of what the evaluators would think of as "lessons learned." From these lessons the respondents commented on what they think should be considered for future programming approaches, given that they uniformly believe that there will be a continuing need for ACR-type programming for the foreseeable future.

The lessons learned and directions for the future can be grouped into two themes: programming *content* and programming *processes*.

3.5.1 Alternatives/Future Directions in Programming Content

The respondents generally feel that the range of ACR programming is appropriate and quite effective, but they also feel that there are improvements that should be made. It will be remembered that, in practice, most of the communities actively engaged in making

their own modifications in programming. They could do this because they worked together and because the framework of the ACR/SI was sufficiently flexible for them to do so.

The central issue for respondents in terms of improvements in programming was finding a way to be more effective with the multi-barrier client who often is deeply entrenched in a complex set of behaviours and circumstances that make moving off IA very difficult to achieve. The government partners and the service providers are increasingly faced with a substantial proportion of clients with this profile.[10] In part, the Phases of BC Benefits contribute to this situation, in that a Phase II person is more likely to be less amenable to re-attachment to the labour force. In part, the increasing proportion of increasingly challenging clients arises from the larger economic context. Respondents spoke over and over about the numbers of middle-aged workers with very low educational levels, and few if any skills, knowledge or attitudes that could help them be employable in today's labour market. The well-paid job in a resource industry, for those with modest occupational skills (whether in the bush, down the mine, or in the company office), is well on its way out. The criteria for jobs in services, even at the most modest levels, are steadily rising, as well.

What respondents suggest then, is that continued efforts be made to develop and support programming that achieves two objectives related to the goals of ACR programming. These two objectives are:

- Develop assessment tools that are more effective for identifying the barriers of the most high-need clientele;

- Provide programming that supports this client group in their activities *after* the assessment process. The clientele needs support as they move along to the services to which they have been referred *and* they need support once they have found employment (i.e., provide job retention skills programming and provide mentoring to assist the person while they are on the job).

An interesting nuance to the assessment process for the high-need client was mentioned by a government partner. The respondent noted that many long-term IA clients *already* have received a number of different services over time, sometimes under EI programming before going on IA, and sometimes as they have cycled in and out of employment. This respondent said:

> *Now we will be getting people coming to Starting Points who have been to all the other activities [provided through HRDC, when on EI, etc.]. So if you have done all the other programming, what is the barrier for you? It will no longer be acceptable to just pick a resource. Now we need to find out what the problem is, so this [future]*

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10 This phenomenon is by no means confined to BC, of course. The details of our reliance on resource-based industries may be distinctive to us, but the trends in polarization of the workforce in terms of skills, income level, job tenure, etc., are global. The challenges for governments for finding ways of reducing the negative impacts of these trends on those most vulnerable to them are also global. As we noted in our evaluation of Job Finding Clubs in BC, governments are having to recognize the nature of these trends and to program accordingly for the increasingly large core of individuals for whom standard programming is ineffective.

intervention needs to place more emphasis on one-to-one counselling and assessment within the Starting Points concept, for Phase II people. At [provincial ministry] we need some kind of a tool to assess needs and identify specific barriers, which Starting Points has not done in the past. The focus will be on what has not been successful in the first set of interventions and identifies what is available that can address the identified barriers and any problems experienced in the first set of interventions.

It is clear, then, that from the respondents' viewpoint, the ACR/SI has demonstrated that there is a need for an intensive, individualized approach to assessment programming, and that this must be effectively articulated with the services to follow. This is reinforced by the many comments made by respondents about whether ACR programming in itself continues to be needed — they identified in that section of the interview the same types of programming that should be developed and supported in the future.

3.5.2 Alternatives/Future Directions in Programming Processes

Much of what was learned had to do with the coordination of processes among the various partners. In addition, there were lessons learned by the respondents about the importance of harmonizing the larger context in which these processes take place.

Several of the lessons learned about what could be improved in programming processes may be obsolete, or on the way to being so. That is, the whole issue of Phases and the impacts this had on processes like referrals into or out of the ACR/SI pilots may be resolved if the Phases are eliminated. The associated lesson that respondents learned was that it is important that channels of communication about program processes be open and active throughout both the planning and implementation processes. This includes communication at a local, horizontal level, and vertically — between the pilots and management among the government partners.

An issue related to both planning and communication was the uneven participation of the government partners. We have already described some of the negative impacts of this on the various stakeholders, but the lesson learned can lead to positive outcomes in future. Respondents feel that there must be equal buy-in by all government partners, and this must be reflected by all partners being signatories of any agreements or memoranda of understanding. Respondents feel that this equal partnership should be reflected at the community level, with all relevant staff being encouraged and supported by their own management in active participation in program development and implementation.

The importance of harmonizing implementation processes became very clear to respondents across government and among service providers. They feel that considerable benefits could be achieved through this in terms of savings of time and money and improvements in working relationships.

A number of respondents related the very practical issue of measuring outcome to the larger contextual issue of harmonizing goals for programming. That is, they said it is

important for the government partners to have a clearly defined goal for the programming. Until these goals are clearly set out and agreed upon, respondents say, there is no reasonable way to measure success.

For example, is the goal to move clients directly into the workforce, or is it simply to set their feet along the best, most realistic path toward eventual employment? Given the brief nature of the intervention, even in those cases where more intensive programming was developed, is it realistic to measure effectiveness by employment found, or further training? Given the range of employability barriers clients face, and their local labour markets, is immediate employment the measure? As one government representative said:

> *The thing about the ACR is that it is an assessment and referral mechanism so in itself does not have a direct impact on reducing [the numbers of people on IA/EI]. It's not a direct job placement activity so that makes it hard to know if it has had an impact. We need to assess whether we're getting people into a program to increase their employability — the numbers of IA and EI recipients are primarily dependent on the status of the labour market. It's important to separate out ACR impacts from labour market impacts.*

Several respondents also noted that no matter what the criteria for program success, with the limitations of the current tracking system, it would not be possible to measure outcome. They noted that if the criteria were to be defined in future, the tracking and information management systems would have to be coordinated to enable accurate measurement.

Although a number of the lessons learned had to do with problems that arose, the respondents also spoke to what they learned about what works well. We have already reported in the section on impacts that respondents learned that working together was both possible and beneficial. Respondents understand that this collaborative process is the way of the future and for the most part they support it, in principle and in application on a day-to-day basis.

3.5.3 Summary of Findings on Alternatives/Directions for the Future

Respondents feel that the basic functions of ACR programming should continue to be provided, but that there is an increasing need to develop assessment tools that can be more effective with the multi-barrier, long-term IA recipient. If obstacles to an effective process, such as the waiting period arising out of BC Benefits legislation on Phases for receipt of services, are removed, then a number of possible problems for future programming would be reduced or eliminated.

Respondents feel that the collaborative, co-managed and co-funded approach holds much promise, but they point out that programming goals and processes need to be harmonized among each of the government partners. This will enable clarification of programming goals and facilitate the identification of criteria for success, which in turn could lead to a more effective assessment of outcome.

3.6 Evaluative Conclusions and Lessons Learned — A Summary

The ACR/SI was designed to be a *strategic* approach to enhancing the panoply of assessment, counselling and referral services provided to persons requiring (and required to pursue) assistance in achieving financial independence from government income support programs — through increased attachment to the labour force.

The pilot projects clearly demonstrate that there is a need for such programming and that the enhancement of existing services is both necessary and possible. It is clear that having project planning undertaken by a Steering Committee of local partners at both government levels, acting in concert in many cases with service deliverers, was an effective, if sometimes taxing, means of ensuring that programming met local needs in an innovative manner. The on-going co-management of programming was generally effective, though it was not without its problems at times.

Work remains to be done to harmonize the sometimes divergent mandates, policies, and day-to-day procedures of the two levels of government (and the three partners — MHR, MAETT, and HRDC). It is also important to develop additional assessment tools that will be more effective with the various client groups who experience their own distinctive barriers to the move toward independence. Barriers of age, life style, inadequate linguistic skills for the local labour market, insufficient familiarity with the workings of the labour market (job search, job maintenance, etc.) call for more diverse tools for assessment than were available within the ACR/SI pilot project programming. This constraint is by no means limited to the ACR programming, of course.

If the ACR/SI is seen as an experiment from which useful lessons can be learned, it has succeeded in being so. This report as a whole has highlighted the elements of programming processes and content that are effective and that serve as a legacy of the ACR/SI pilots. These lessons include:

- Collaborative planning and programming implementation among various government partners can indeed be effective. There is a vast storehouse of experience and positive motivation among the partners in relation to the design and management of programming in ACR functions. This has been drawn upon in itself as the ACR developed and the partners for the most part have themselves learned even more from the ACR experience. They see themselves as very well placed to work together in the LMDA context and indeed are already doing so.

- Effective communication channels among all stakeholders are vital to successful program development and implementation.

- Planning and implementation in a partnership context is impeded when there is an incongruity — *perceived* or otherwise — in the "philosophies" of the various partners, but these impediments are not insuperable if the overall commitment of the partners is strong. This has been the case in the ACR/SI, where many of the impediments were overcome on a daily basis.

- Planning and implementation are also impeded if there are divergent operating policies and practices. These are very challenging to overcome, and it appears that on-going work will need to be done to harmonize these practices as the roles of the various government partners continue to evolve.

- The flexibility allowed to local partners and their local service deliverers to modify programming in response to changing needs is a welcome approach for all concerned. Partners and contractors in general believe this will allow for a more effective and efficient approach to programming that will better meet client needs.

- There is a need for assessment tools that are more effective for identifying employability obstacles for high-need, multi-barrier clients.

- The findings on successful outcome indicate that the ACR/SI programming as a whole is an effective way of moving participants toward employment and enhanced employability through further training. It must be kept in mind that this is a very short intervention, but the survey data indicate quite strongly that it is an advantage to have participated in an ACR pilot project, compared with not having participated in other employment-related programming.

- There is a need for programming that continues to support the high-need client after the assessment process, so they can effectively improve their employability and retain employment.

- The qualitative data from the wide range of interviews indicate that it is very important for programming options to be delivered to those for whom the programs were designed, rather than applying an option that was carefully targeted to a given profile group to a different target group. It was clearly felt that there is a lesson to be learned if the "boundaries" of a given program's target group are blurred, in that there is a resultant loss of program effectiveness (and program *or* contractor credibility, as well).

- The tracking of clients at both government and service provider levels remains a major challenge, and it is difficult to provide seamless service and comprehensive follow-up at a service or evaluative level without a truly adequate database.

Thus, the overall lesson learned from the ACR/SI is that it is a model that was effective in itself. The outcomes were positive. It is a demonstration of the value and efficiency of a locally planned and implemented program. The problems that arose often reflected contradictions in the larger policy and legislative framework, rather than a lack of will or skill on the part of those who initially conceived it or those who then carried it out. The essential elements of its programming content — including the flexibility to modify programming readily — are all worth incorporating into future programming to meet the original policy goals.

(Our recommendations in relation to future directions are provided under separate cover.)

Appendix: List of Respondents

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
Abbotsford	Bill Beatty Programs and Services Officer HRCC — Abbotsford	Steering Committee Member
	Klaus Werner (former Supervisor Employment Services HRCC — Abbotsford) Manager Community Development CFDC of North Fraser — Mission	Steering Committee Member
	Dave Errington Training Consultant (formerly MAETT — Abbotsford) MAETT — Chilliwack	Steering Committee Member
	Kamal Binpal (former Skills BC Coordinator MAETT — Abbotsford) Industrial Adjustment Consultant MAETT — Surrey	Steering Committee Member
	Alan Timberlake Area Manager MAETT — Abbotsford	Steering Committee Member
	Bob Bolton Program Director University College of Fraser Valley — Abbotsford	Service Provider
	Martin den Haan Facilitator (Starting Points) University College of Fraser Valley — Abbotsford	Service Provider
Nanaimo/Parksville	Barry Hodgson Service Delivery Team Leader HRCC — Nanaimo	Steering Committee Member (Nanaimo/Parksville)
	Lucy Taylor Manager Community Services HRCC — Nanaimo	Steering Committee Member (Nanaimo)
	Jenny Godfrey (former Area Manager) Adjustment Consultant MAETT — Nanaimo	Steering Committee Member (Nanaimo)

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	Janet King Training Consultant MAETT — Parksville	Steering Committee Member (Parksville)
	Susanna Blackburn Director, Island Skill Development Centre Nanaimo	Service Provider (Nanaimo)
	Lindsay Smith Facilitator, Island Skill Development Centre Nanaimo	Service Provider (Nanaimo)
	Brien Laflamme Coordinator Ladysmith Employment Assistance Society Ladysmith	Service Provider (Nanaimo)
	David Moddle Owner, Lifeworks Consulting Nanaimo	Service Provider (Nanaimo/Parksville)
	Tom Benjamin Owner, Thomas Benjamin & Associates Powell River	Service Provider (Nanaimo/Parksville)
	Ann Cameron Executive Director, The Career Centre Parksville	Service Provider (Parksville)
	Jacqueline Russell Facilitator, The Career Centre Parksville	Service Provider (Parksville)
	Janet Kimmel Facilitator, The Career Centre Parksville	Service Provider (Parksville)
	Karen Dawe Tutoring Program Coordinator Malaspina College Parksville	Service Provider (Parksville)
Campbell River	Rob Beauchamp Service Team Leader HRCC — Campbell River	Steering Committee Member
	Peter Davey (former Manager of HRDC — Campbell River) Manager Employment Programming, Income Security and Control HRCC — Nanaimo	Steering Committee Member

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	Rob Jones Training Consultant MAETT — Courtenay	Steering Committee Member
	Sue Christiaens Acting Regional Training Advisor MHR — Campbell River	Steering Committee Member
	Denise Dawson Executive Director Campbell River Opportunities Career Services Campbell River	Service Provider
	Mary Ashley Facilitator, MLA & Associates Campbell River	Service Provider
	Doug Preston Executive Director Campbell River Employment Foundations Soc. Campbell River	Service Provider
	Manfred Laube Coordinator of Continuing Education Campbell River School District #72 Campbell River	Service Provider
Surrey	Linda Jacobsen Programs and Services Officer HRCC — Surrey	Steering Committee Member
	Carol Helgeson Programs and Services Officer HRCC — Langley	Project Officer for ACR PARC project
	Melody Smith Area Manager MAETT — Surrey	Steering Committee Member
	Susan Burnett Training Consultant MAETT — Surrey	Steering Committee Member
	Bev Coleman LMDA/EDP Coordinator MHR — Surrey	Steering Committee Member
	Floyd Johnson Vice President, Options Unlimited New Westminster	Service Provider

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	Gisela Theurer Programs Manager Surrey Rehab Society Vocational Services Surrey	Service Provider
	Colleen Avery Coordinator (JAWS) Surrey Rehab Society Vocational Services Surrey	Service Provider
	Kirk Austin Clinical Director, PARC (Pacific Assessment Referral and Counselling) Salvation Army Langley	Service Provider
	Bruce Wagner Counsellor, PARC Salvation Army Langley	Service Provider
	Mike Wilson Executive Director, Phoenix Society Surrey	Service Provider
Coquitlam	Mike Whelan Service Delivery Manager HRCC — Coquitlam	Steering Committee Member
	Val Fox Acting Skills BC Coordinator MAETT — Coquitlam	Steering Committee Member
	Christine Bowman Owner, Bowman & Associates Maple Ridge	Service Provider
	Bruce Buxton Owner, Buxton Consulting Maple Ridge	Service Provider
Kamloops	Kathy Aldis (Saucier) HRDC — Kamloops	Steering Committee Member
	Al Thomas HRDC — Kamloops	Steering Committee Member
	Debbi Kinahan General Manager Aspen Education — Kamloops	Service Provider
Prince Rupert	Sharon Sheppard HRDC — Prince Rupert	Steering Committee Member

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	Janet Northcott Training Consultant MAETT- Prince Rupert	Steering Committee Member
Fort St. John	Eryn Dalton District Supervisor Ministry of Human Resources — Fort St. John	Steering Committee Member
	Clovette Chandler Training Consultant MAETT — Fort St. John	Steering Committee Member
	Carolyn Gronland Sunnyside Enterprises The Support Centre — Fort St. John	Service Provider
Nelson/Nakusp	Rob Thompson HR Investment Fund Manager HRDC, Nelson	Steering Committee Member
	Jim McAllister Area Manager MAETT, Cranbrook/Kelowna	Steering Committee Member
	Barb Goertzen Coordinator, Career Development Services Nelson & District Community Resource Soc. Nelson	Service Provider
	Sylvia Smith Starting Points Facilitator Nelson & District Community Resource Soc. Nelson	Service Provider
	Tom Fulcko Employment Counsellor Outreach Employment Services Nakusp	Service Provider
	Terri MacLeod Employment Counsellor Outreach Employment Services Nakusp	Service Provider
	Doug Switzer Administrator Outreach Employment Services Nakusp	Service Provider
	Harry Stan Executive Director, Ashland Training Castlegar	Service Provider

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
Burnaby	Dave Beath Service Delivery Operations Consultant HRDC — Burnaby	Steering Committee Member
	Vicki Mulligan Skills BC Coordinator MAETT — Burnaby	Steering Committee Member
	Chris Garcia Contract Manager MAETT — Burnaby	Steering Committee Member
	Donna Tang Program Services Officer HRDC — Burnaby	Steering Committee Member
	Caroline Robertson Managing Partner YES Canada — Burnaby	Service Provider
	Hal Klein President Hal Klein and Associates — Burnaby	Service Provider
	Shahinoor Dossa ACR Supervisor — Burnaby	Service Provider
Vancouver	Elizabeth Murdoch HRDC — Vancouver	Steering Committee Member
	Steve Ko Skills Coordinator MAETT — Vancouver	Steering Committee Member
	Dave Jagpal District Supervisor MHR — Vancouver	Steering Committee Member
	Jean Baldock Training Consultant MAETT — Vancouver	Steering Committee Member
	David Schine President Corporate Career Development — Vancouver	Service Provider (westside)
	Greg Stephens Manager of AC Program Corporate Career Development — Vancouver	Service Provider (westside)

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	Cecilia Pineda Program Coordinator Job Search Central (Career Resource Centre) Vancouver School Board — Vancouver	Service Provider (westside)
	Andrew Long Co-Manager Job Search Central (Career Resource Centre) — Vancouver	Service Provider (westside)
	Lorna Cookson Co-Manager Job Search Central (Career Resource Centre) — Vancouver	Service Provider (westside)
	Betty Tully President Tully & Co. Ltd — Vancouver	Service Provider (east)
	Marty Whitman Director Metro Training Institute — Vancouver	Service Provider (east)
	Barbara Rode ACR Coordinator — Vancouver	Service Provider (east)
	Cheryl Mixon Director, Youth Services Division Family Services of Greater Vancouver — Vancouver	Service Provider (south east)
	Maggie Ducket Employment Programs Coordinator South Vancouver Neighbourhood House — Vancouver	Service Provider (south east)
	Marilyn Michaud ACR Coordinator — Vancouver	Service Provider (south east)
Program Wide	Jaimi Sinclair ACR Coordinator HRDC — Vancouver	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Rob Mastin Programs Consultant HRDC — Vancouver	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Barbara Stobie Manager Corporate Services HRCC — Surrey	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee

ACR Evaluation — Key Respondents (continued)		
ACR — Community	**Contact**	**Role**
	David Askew Area Manager MAETT — Vancouver (also interviewed re: Burnaby project)	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Peter Kagis Manager, Labour Market Programs MHR — Victoria	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Charles Perrin HRDC	Co-Chair Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Jennifer Standeven Director of Program Planning & Development Skills Development Division MAETT	Co-Chair Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee
	Alan Rachue A/Manager Program Planning & Development Skills Development Division MAETT	Canada/BC ACR/SI Steering Committee